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Duane D. Pearsall obituary written by Marjorie Pearsall

Marjorie Pearsall

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SUMMIT

DUANE D. PEARSALL
1922-2010

Duane D. Pearsall, inventor of the battery powered home smoke detector, died in Denver April 11. He was 88. Pearsall's accidental discovery in the 1960's that ions are rapidly absorbed by particles of combustion, led to his introduction of the battery powered ionization home smoke detector in 1967.

Smoke detectors are widely credited with saving thousands of lives from death by fire. Pearsall was instrumental in changing commercial and home building codes to require the installation of smoke detection devices. His company, Statitrol Corporation, was located in Lakewood. In 1978 he sold Statitrol to Emerson Electric.

In 1976, the Small Business Administration named Pearsall as Small Business Person of the Year for Colorado. The same year the SBA chose him from among the 51 state honorees as National Small Business Person of the Year. President Gerald Ford presented the award in a ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Following these awards, Pearsall became a spokesman for small business. He made numerous trips to Washington, D.C. to testify before Congressional committees on small business issues. For nearly 20 years he was a frequent speaker to business and civic groups and was an invited guest lecturer in colleges and universities. He helped found

the Small Business Council of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 1976, and in 1979 was chairman of the Colorado Small Business Council. From 1975-1978 he served as a director of the Denver Chamber of Commerce, and from 1982-1989 as a director of the Colorado Association of Commerce and Industry, serving as chairman in 1985-1986.

Meanwhile, he continued his volunteer activities promoting fire protection. In 1980, the Society of Fire Protection Engineers named him "Fire Protection Man of the Year."

In 1983, Pearsall became a co-founder and general partner in Columbine Venture Funds located in Denver. He retired in 1993. The Rockies Venture Club, an organization that helps entrepreneurs obtain funding, established the Duane Pearsall Entrepreneurial Award, given at irregular intervals to noteworthy business owners. Recipients have included John Elway, former Governor Roy Romer, Bill Daniels (posthumously), Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper and Rick Patch. Pearsall retired from business in 1993.

Born in Pontiac, Michigan March 3, 1922, Pearsall attended high school in Keego Harbor, Michigan. After two years at General Motors Institute (now Kettering University), his studies were interrupted by World War II. Pearsall spent three years, from 1942-1945 in the Navy Air Corps, first as a navigator assigned to submarine patrol and later as pilot. He graduated from the University of Denver in 1947 with a B.S. B.A. degree.

Pearsall played a major role in the creation of the Fire Protection Engineering Department at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, now recognized as one of the leading fire safety study programs in the world. In 1996, WPI awarded him an honorary doctorate degree in science.

After graduating from DU, Pearsall was employed by Honeywell in Denver for seven years and then, prior to founding Statitrol, operated Pearsall Company, a manufacturer's agent for heating and air conditioning equipment.

Throughout his life, Pearsall adhered to the Christian faith. He was baptized at birth and again as an expression of his faith in 2003.

Pearsall's family includes his wife Marjorie whom he married in 1944, four adult children, seven grandchildren and two great grandchildren. Friends who wish to honor his memory are encouraged to contribute to the Alzheimer's Association.

A memorial service will be held in Dillon at the Dillon Community Church, Sunday, April 18 at 1:00 p.m. A celebration of his life will take place Tuesday, April 20 at 7:00 p.m. at WindCrest Retirement Center, 3235 Mill Vista Rd., Highlands Ranch.

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