

Joseph Edward Wagner

1926 - 2018

Obituary



Joseph E. Wagner, businessman, philanthropist, and civic leader, passed away peacefully at his home on December 16 after a long and storied life. He was 92. As chairman of the local Caterpillar Tractor dealership, Wagner Equipment Co., from 1976 to present-day, Joe will be remembered for his business acumen, his kind and generous nature, and his trademark sense of humor.

Joe was born on September 23, 1926 in Chicago, Illinois. He credited both his father John, a tool and die maker, and his mother Julia with his strong work ethic. Joe immersed himself in any number of hobbies from photography to sports to music. He may have been the first person at Glenbard High School in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, to both play the trumpet in the marching band - and to letter in football. During the summers - and never one to shy away from hard work - he took whatever jobs came his way, from handling hot wire coils to laying railroad ties.

From 1944 to 1946, Joe served in the Army Air Corps. After his discharge, he would attend Knox College where he met his future wife Mary Louise Darr. Mary and Joe were married on June 23, 1951 and would settle in Denver where Joe had briefly been stationed. Mary and Joe would have five children - Laurie, Bruce, Darr, Jeff, and Scott. After Mary's untimely death in 1977, Joe married prominent local businesswoman Judith Buck in 1980 and they had a daughter, Betsy.

From 1952 to 1953, Joe worked for Frontier Airlines. A year later, Joe's father-in-law, Harold Darr bought the Caterpillar dealership in Dallas. Joe would become executive vice president and co-owner of Darr Equipment Co. from 1954 to 1976. In 1976, Joe acquired the Caterpillar dealership in Colorado, expanding the business from 300 employees and five locations to its current 1400 employees and 33 locations, acquiring Rust Tractor in 2002, and expanding to New Mexico and El Paso, Texas. In 1996, Wagner Equipment Co. would become a worldwide presence as the Caterpillar dealership for Mongolia. Joe has received awards from the Colorado Contractors' Association, the Colorado Business Hall of Fame, the Family Service Award - Daniels College of Business and Inc. Magazine's Entrepreneur of the Year.

He was president and chairman for the Denver Area Council Boy Scouts, and has served on the boards of Denver Boys and Girls Club, Children's Hospital Colorado and Children's Hospital Colorado Foundation, Colorado UpLift and the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, Wells Fargo Bank Community Board, Denver Rotary Club and Wellshire Presbyterian Church.

Joe was preceded in death by his first wife, Mary Darr Wagner and his son Harold Darr Wagner. He is survived by his wife Judi, his five children, Laurie Ingram (David), Bruce (Bev), Jeff (Lisa), Scott (Rachel), Betsy; his grandchildren, Mary Megan Holtmeyer (Tyler), Joseph Braden Wagner, John Taylor Wagner, Austin Lee DeSico, Jordan Richard Wagner, and Sarah Louise Wagner and his great-grandchild, Nina Marie Holtmeyer.

Joe will be greatly missed. Services will be held at Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church located at 1980 Dahlia Street, Denver Colorado, 80220 on Friday December 21, 2018 at 10:30 AM. In lieu of flowers, contributions to Children's Hospital Colorado Foundation would be appreciated.