ROSS, SIDNEY

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OBITUARIES

Sidney T. Ross, 88, founder of Ross-Simons jewelry

CRANSTON — Sidney T. Ross, 88, of the Meshanticut Valley Parkway, a founder of the jewelry retail business Ross-Simons, died yesterday at Rhode Island Hospital, in Providence.

Mr. Ross' philosophy was that every man should be able to buy luxury jewelry.

"At the time, there was a Tiffany's mentality out there. Everything was very expensive," said Dante Bellini Jr., of RDW Group, who has worked with Mr. Ross, and handled marketing and advertising for Ross-Simons, for 27 years. "His thinking, which became very innovative thinking, was to offer luxury goods at affordable prices."

Mr. Ross' business model angered many jewelry manufacturers and retailers.

Several companies sued him in the 1970s, to force him to charge more for Ross-Simons products. Mr. Ross won — thanks, in part, to his early legal training — and the company thrived.

Since its founding 52 years ago, Ross-Simons has grown into a leading national catalog, Internet and retail jeweler, with 14 stores in nine states, and more than 50 million catalogs distributed each year. Ross-Simons' annual sales are approximately $250 million.

Mr. Ross, a self-made man, was accepted to Tufts University, in Medford, Mass., after high school, but wasn't able to attend. His father worked in a shoe factory, and there wasn't enough scholarship money available to make it affordable.

Instead, he went to work and put himself through the night program at the Northeastern College of Law, in Boston.

Unable to make a living as a lawyer, he ended up working in the retail jewelry industry, in Boston, New Bedford and Providence, before opening his first Ross-Simons store, in 1952, on the eighth floor of the Lapham Building in downtown Providence.

"My father believed there was a niche in the Providence market, and by extension, across the country for gifts of luxury at affordable prices," said Darrell Ross, one of his sons, who both followed their parents into the business.

"Today, over 50 years later, my father's legacy is a worldwide recognized and successful brand based on his unique insight and vision," he said.

Mr. Ross remained active in all aspects of the business until he retired, at the age of 82, after having open-heart surgery.

He was the husband of Lillian S. (Singerman) Ross; they had been married for 63 years. Born in Lynn, Mass., a son of the late Louis and Rebecca Ross, he had lived in Providence for seven years before moving of Cranston in 1950.

Mr. Ross was a 1933 graduate of Lynn Classical High School, and a 1938 graduate of the Northeastern College of Law.

He was a member of Temple Beth-El, in Providence.

Besides his wife, he leaves two sons, Mark A. Ross of Warwick and Darrell S. Ross of Providence; and five grandchildren. He was the brother of the late Harry, Theodore and Ernest Ross.

The funeral will be held tomorrow at noon in Temple Beth-El, 70 Orchard Ave., Providence. Burial will be in Temple Beth-El Cemetery, Providence.

ROSS, Sidney

September 21, 2004. Beloved husband of Lillian S. (Singerman) Ross. Residence: 315 Meshanticut Valley Pkwy., Cranston. Dear father of Mark A. and his wife Donna Ross, Warwick and Darrell S. and his wife Susan Ross, Providence. Loving brother of the late Harry, Theodore and Ernest Ross. Devoted grandfather of Jared, Seth, Leslie, Meredith and Daniel Ross. Funeral service 12:00 p.m. Thursday at Temple Beth-El, 70 Orchard Ave., Providence. Relatives and friends are invited. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the charity of your choice. Shiva to be observed at his late residence Thursday 2-4 and 7-9 p.m. and Friday 12-3 p.m.
The family was assisted with the arrangements by SUGARMAN-SINAI MEMORIAL CHAPEL.