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SINCLAIR, JOSEPH S. "DODY"

Media pioneer Joseph S. Sinclair, 80, headed Outlet Company for 28 years

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NARRAGANSETT — Joseph S. "Dody" Sinclair, 80, former president and retired chairman of the board of The Outlet Company, owners of Channel 10, WJAR-TV, died yesterday at South County Hospital. He had suffered a severe stroke last week.

The company was founded in 1896 by his grandfather, Colonel Joseph Samuels Sinclair and the colonel's brother, Leon Samuels, and became one of the largest employers and the most successful companies in Rhode Island retail and broadcasting history.



He was the husband of Rosalyn Dwares Sinclair, whom he married in 1969. Their primary residence was in Narragansett, in a house Mr. Sinclair built on Boston Neck Road on the site of his grandfather's former home. They also lived in Palm Beach.

He was involved in many broadcast and civic organizations, and belonged to numerous private beach and country clubs, including the Dunes Club and the Agawam Hunt Club, and the Palm Beach Polo and Country Club in Florida.

He was known as a man of great humor. He was a competent tennis player, and also played golf.

"DODY WAS A LEADER in the community, he was the leader in his wonderful family, he was a lifelong friend, and we shall all miss him greatly," said former Gov. Bruce Sundlun, retired president of the Outlet Company.

"Dody was one of the leaders of the [broadcasting] industry in the NBC network. And you know, Channel 10 has been the leader since the day it went on the air," the former governor said.

Sundlun recalled Mr. Sinclair as "a very funny person," who was fond of his cigars. "He smoked Cuban cigars," Sundlun said.

"He was a lifelong friend, and nobody ever had a more loyal friend," said Prof. John Sapinsley of Providence.

"He had enormous foresight with respect to the television industry. He was one of the pioneers .... He made any number of important and correct decisions with respect to the industry.

"He appeared on the outside to be a tough, gruff guy," said Sapinsley, "but on the inside, he had a heart of gold."

loved Hollywood."

Mr. Sinclair had served as The Outlet Company's chairman of the board from 1960 to 1988, during a period of tremendous growth.

The company grew from one store and one station, in one city, to 117 retail stores and 15 major television and radio stations in the nation's top 50 markets, including Channel 10, WJAR-TV, in Providence.

MR. SINCLAIR INHERITED control of the company in 1958, but not without a fight.

When Colonel Samuels died, the control of the company shifted, under the terms of his will, to the Industrial Trust Company as trustee of Colonel Samuels's estate: a proviso deemed that the Samuels stock would descend to Joseph Sinclair when he reached the age of 40.

Mr. Sinclair's mother, Bertha "Babe" (Samuel) Sinclair, died before her son reached 40. The stock went directly to him, with the bank as trustee.

During that time, the trustees steered a conservative course, with one exception: the launching of WJAR-TV, in 1949, as an extension of the company's broadcasting interests.

But in 1958, a few years before Mr. Sinclair reached his 40th birthday, the trustees abruptly announced the sale of The Outlet Company to William Zeckendoff, a major New York real-estate investor.

Mr. Sinclair challenged the sale through a lawsuit filed by former Governor Sundlun and former Sen. John H. Chafee, then two young local lawyers.

After a Superior Court trial, the presiding justice decided in favor of Mr. Sinclair and enjoined the sale. On appeal, the state Supreme Court sustained the injunction.

The lawsuit became known as one of the largest and most important civil actions ever filed in the state.

Mr. Sinclair then became chairman, and Sundlun and Chafee became members, of the company's board of directors. Kenneth Logowitz was elected president.

A series of acquisitions soon followed, including Shartenbergs in Pawtucket; four or more Outlet stores in Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts; the Denby chain in Albany, N.Y.; the Phillipsborn chain in Washington, D.C.; Hughes & Hatcher, a menswear chain, in Detroit, Mich.; and the Cherry & Webb stores in Providence.

The stock rose from $4 when Mr. Sinclair assumed control to $68

Academy, Mr. Sinclair had attended Williams College for a year before transferring to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Md., from which he graduated in 1945.

He was a Navy veteran of World War II, and was recalled to active service during the Korean War. He served aboard the battle cruiser Guam, the cruiser Huntington and the aircraft carrier Coral Sea.

He retired from the Navy after the Korean War, and was then responsible for introducing television to the family company.

He daily climbed to the top of the Industrial National Bank tower, on Westminster Street in downtown Providence, to switch on the power for the television station, which, at the outset, operated only at night.

UNDER MR. SINCLAIR'S guidance, Outlet acquired additional television stations in Atlanta, Ga.; Orlando, Fla.; San Antonio, Texas; Columbus, Ohio; Indianapolis, Ind.; and Sacramento, Calif. In addition to WJAR-AM in Providence, the company owned radio stations in Washington, D.C., Orlando, Los Angeles, Calif., and Detroit, Mich., as well as several small cable systems. The Outlet Company stock was always listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

Mr. Sinclair was a director of Executive Jet Aviation Inc., Fleet Financial Group, and Fleet National Bank.

He was a longtime director of the TV Board of the National Association of Broadcasters, a former vice-chairman of the National Broadcasting Company TV affiliates, and a former chairman of the Retail Trade Board of the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Sinclair also was a former vice-chairman of the Warwick School Committee.

He was a former chairman of the Board of Visitors of the U.S. Naval Academy, a member of the Newport Naval War College Foundation, the President's Council of Providence College, and the advisory council of Salve Regina University, and a member of the Board of Overseers of Moses Brown School.

He became a very enthusiastic and competent tennis player, and when he reached an age where tennis was too much, he switched to golf, which he played with the same dedication.

Mr. Sinclair was a longtime member of the Dunes Club, the Point Judith Country Club, the Aurora Club, the Agawam Hunt Club and the

SINCLAIR, Joseph S. "Dody"

December 2, 2002. Beloved husband of Rosalyn Dwares Sinclair. Residence: 191 Boston Neck Rd., Narragansett. Dear father of Sherry Sinclair Pedersen, Fresno, CA; Lani Sinclair, Silver Spring, MD; Jodie Sinclair, Brookline, MA; and Sarah Sinclair, Providence. Devoted grandfather of Kelsey Dean, Theodore, James and Isabel Scoliard. Funeral Service 11:00 a.m. Friday at Temple Beth-El, 70 Orchard Ave., Providence. Relatives and friends are invited. In lieu of flowers contributions may be made to South County Hospital, 100 Kenyon Ave., Wakefield, RI 02879 or the Joseph Samuels Dental Clinic at R.I. Hospital, 593 Eddy St., Providence, RI 02903. After the service visitors will be welcomed at his late residence from 1-5 p.m. The family was assisted with the arrangements by the SUGARMAN-SINAI MEMORIAL CHAPEL.