

DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Thursday, April 15, 2010 | Modified: Tuesday, April 20, 2010

Duane Pearsall, smoke-detector pioneer, dies at 88

Denver Business Journal

Duane Pearsall, the Denver-area inventor who helped develop the first practical smoke detector for the home, died April 11. He was 88.

The smoke detectors Pearsall pioneered opened the market to home use. Previous attempts by others to develop smoke detectors weren't practical because they demanded too much power and too much radioactive material.

In the mid-1960s, Pearsall were able to produce a simpler model that was powered by batteries. Their company, Statitrol Corp., was in Lakewood.

Pearsall once said knowing how many lives had been saved through the use of smoke detectors in the home was "a source of considerable satisfaction."

Accolades followed Pearsall. President Gerald Ford presented him with the National Small Business Person of the Year award in 1976. The Society of Fire Protection Engineers in 1980 named him Fire Protection Man of the Year.

Pearsall, who would start a series of companies and retire three separate times, in 1983 co-founded Columbine Venture Funds. The Rockies Venture Club named an award in his honor that goes to notable business owners.

A native of Pontiac, Mich., Pearsall fought in World War II in the Naval Air Corps. After the war, he served in the Naval Air Reserve at Buckley Field from 1948 to 1954. He graduated from the University of Denver in 1947.

Survivors include his wife Marjorie, four adult children, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. The family requests donations be made to the Alzheimer's Association.

A memorial service will be at the Dillon Community Church in Dillon at 1 p.m. April 18. A celebration of his life is scheduled for 7 p.m. April 20 at WindCrest Retirement Center, 3235 Mill Vista Road in Highlands Ranch.

denvernews@bizjournals.com