

Hazel Memorial Service to Be June 5, 2001

- May 30, 2001 Updated Jul 17, 2013

Memorials may be made to the Four Rivers Area YMCA Endowment, Westminster College or East Central College Foundation.

Immediate survivors include his wife Kay (Hammond); a son, Doug, and his wife, Betsy, of Washington; a daughter, Cynthia, and husband, Michael Gilbertson, of Faribault, Minn.; four grandsons, Alex and Kit Hazel, and Mike, Jr., and Andy Gilbertson; and a cousin, Mary Knisely, Vero Beach, Florida.

Mr. Hazel was serving as a trustee for Westminster College in Fulton; was a past chairman of the Specialty Advertising Association International; was a board member of the Center for the Arts in Vero Beach, Florida; was serving on the boards of Citizens National Bank of St. Louis and the United Bank of Union; served as chairman of the Washington Town and Country Fair; served as a director of the Washington Civic Industrial Corporation; was a member of the governing board of the former St. Francis Hospital in Washington (now St. John's Mercy); served on the steering committee for the establishment of East Central College; served on the Washington board of public works for many years; and was chairman of the governing board for the YMCA branch that established the YMCA program in Washington.

He was a member of the Young Presidents' Organization, the Elks Club, Tuscan Masonic Lodge, Scottish Rite and Moolah Shrine.

Once Largest Employer

Mr. Hazel headed a manufacturing company that once was Washington's largest employer. The Ernest Hazel Jr., Inc., company was located on Washington avenue in St. Louis when it moved to Washington and began operations in December, 1960, with about 40 employees. The company was one of the first to locate in Washington through the efforts of the Washington Industrial Corporation. Operations began in a new plant on South Stafford street, which was expanded a number of times as the company grew. At one time the company had manufacturing operations in Washington, California, Canada and Mexico. Employment peaked in Washington at about 600 people and with the other operations there were more than 1,000 workers.

In 1954, Ernest Hazel III joined his father in the business, later became president and then chairman of the board after the death of his father and mother in 1969. Ernest Hazel Jr. and his wife, Norma, died as the result of injuries received in a highway accident in Warren county.

The company was chiefly a county record bindery operation when it moved here. The company's rapid growth came in the manufacture of high quality vinyl and leather products for the office and specialty advertising fields. The Hazel brand line of products became known internationally and still is recognized worldwide in the industry. Annual sales grew to about \$60 million.

In January, 1999, Mr. Hazel became the 52nd inductee into the Promotional Products Association International Hall of Fame. He was recognized for making significant contributions to the promotional products industry and to his community. His company also was recognized for being one of the largest suppliers of vinyl and leather products to the promotional products industry, and for having the industry's most recognizable product line name.

Sold the Company

Mr. Hazel sold the business in 1984 to Jostens, Inc., a Minnesota company that specialized in products for schools and students. He continued with the company for about two years. The company has been sold three times since then. Jostens sold the company to American Trading and Production Corporation, Baltimore, which later sold the company to Eagle OPG, Inc., St. Louis. The present owner is Cardinal Brands, Inc., Lawrence, Kansas. The company currently has more than 400 employees.

In 1988, Mr. Hazel was awarded an honorary doctorate by Westminster College for his contributions to the school. He and Mrs. Hazel donated money for a new building wing for a computer center and library expansion. Their son, Doug, attended Westminster. In recognition of his contributions to the Four Rivers Area YMCA, the new building in Washington was named after the Hazel family. His gift of \$1.5 million made the building possible. The money was matched in a fund drive. The \$1.5 million gift was one of the largest ever made for a civic project in the history of Washington.

Mr. Hazel was born April 29, 1934, in Atchison, Kansas. He was graduated from Western Military Academy, Alton, Ill., and attended Washington University in St. Louis. He was a member of Sigma Chi Fraternity. He married the former Kay Hammond of St. Louis in 1955.

The Hazel family lived in St. Louis for a number of years.

Miller Funeral Home is handling arrangements.