

Darr, Edward Austin ^[1]



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by Deborah Darr Sartin, 1986

23 July 1889–8 Oct. 1958

Edward Austin Darr, tobacco ^[2] official, was born in Baltimore, Md., the son of William H. and Mary Coffman Darr. He was educated in the Baltimore public schools and the McDonogh School for Boys; by attending night school, he received the LL.B. degree from the University of Maryland ^[3] in 1913. For several years he practiced law in Baltimore before joining a wholesale tobacco firm. He served as a Marine Corps ^[4] sergeant during World War I ^[5] and returned to Baltimore as president and part owner of B. L. Frey and Brothers, tobacco dealers. He joined the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company ^[6] in 1920 as assistant secretary and was named sales manager in 1937, vice-president in 1946, and president from 1952 to 1957. At the time of his death, he was vice-chairman of the board and chairman of the executive committee.

Darr married Frances Payne in 1919 but she died in 1920. They had one son, Edward, Jr. In 1924 he married Ruth Ely, a former opera and concert singer, who died 11 Feb. 1958. They had five children: Drusilla Brewster (Mrs. Richard R. Hall), Deborah Ely (Mrs. Robert P. Sartin), Mary Ruth (Mrs. Norman Messner), David William, and Cicely Ann (Mrs. William C. Roth).

Darr was a member of the Winston-Salem ^[7] Polo team in the late 1920s, a member of Winston-Salem's first boxing commission, and for ten years a member of Reynolds Park Recreation Commission. He served as chairman of the fund drive to build Ernie Shore Field baseball park and as chairman of the United Way. He also held membership in the National Planning Association, the Winston-Salem and National Sales Executives Clubs, Rotary, Twin City Club, Forsyth and Old Town Country clubs, New York Athletic Club, and the Metropolitan Club of New York. He was a member and officer of the Christian Science ^[8] church, which he joined after a healing, through the church, of his sight. In addition, Darr was instrumental in starting North Carolina's driver education program for students.

In 1957, for the first time, Reynolds Tobacco Company went over the billion dollar sales mark partly as a result of the phenomenal success of the first filter-tipped cigarette made for the American market. Darr brought the idea for filter cigarettes from Switzerland in 1951 but met with opposition within the company. It was noted that "the effort was little more than perfunctory until November 1952, when Darr became Reynolds' president. He immediately threw his entire weight behind the inchoate development effort, and work proceeded with vigor." He "gave instructions to Haddon S. Kirk, . . . director . . ., in charge of manufacturing, to 'start experimenting again with filter-tip cigarettes and develop a blend.'" The new brand, Winston, sold 6.5 billion during the first nine months. Salem filter-tipped menthols followed in April 1956 with corresponding success.

References:

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Winston-Salem *Twin City Sentinel*, 8 Oct. 1958.

Additional Resources:

Kluger, Richard. *Ashes to Ashes: America's Hundred-Year Cigarette War, the Public Health, and the Unabashed Triumph of Philip Morris*. Random House Digital, Inc., 2010. http://books.google.com/books?id=dxl_us9Tq-QC&dq=Edward+Darr+winston&source=gbs_navlinks_s&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false ^[9] (accessed July 9, 2013).

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