

## Sidney Harman 1918-2011



Sidney Harman, a polymath whose companies made high-quality home sound reproduction accessible to a broad base of consumers, passed away on April 12, 2011. Born in Montreal, Canada in 1918, he earned a B.S. in physics from Baruch College of the City College of New York in 1939. He served in the United States Army Signal Corps during World War II. After the war, he was an engineer and manager at the David Bogen Co., whose DB10 power amplifier was popular with post-WW II high-fidelity enthusiasts.

Harman and colleague Bernard Kardon founded Harman/Kardon in 1953, and the following year their company released the first integrated high-fidelity receiver, the Festival D1000, which incorporated the tuner, preamplifier, and power amplifier on a single chassis, helping to popularize high-quality home sound reproduction. Harman/Kardon was also one of the first consumer electronic manufacturers to incorporate printed circuit boards in its products, thus lowering costs and selling prices.

Harman bought Kardon's share in 1956 and ran the company until 1962, when he merged it with Jerrold, a manufacturer of master antenna television equipment. Jerrold bought him out, and he took over Jervis, a small conglomerate. Jervis subsequently bought a number of audio companies including James B. Lansing Sound (JBL) as well as buying back Harman/Kardon, and Jervis was renamed Harman International Industries, Inc.

One of its subsidiaries, an automotive mirror plant in Bolivar, Tennessee, was experiencing serious quality and labor problems, and in 1972, Harman collaborated with the United Auto Workers union to create the Quality of Working Life program, one of the

first worker-empowered, quality-driven manufacturing environments in North America. His 1973 Union Institute and University doctoral dissertation was based on this program.

During this period, Harman International also acquired other high-fidelity brands such as Tannoy, Ortofon, and Infinity, and it established a network of distribution subsidiaries and affiliations in much of the world.

In late 1976, Sidney Harman was appointed undersecretary of commerce in the Carter Administration. He was required to divest himself of potential conflicts of interest, and he sold Harman International to Beatrice Foods, a megaconglomerate whose interests included luggage, orange juice, recreational vehicles, and other unrelated businesses.

After leaving his government post in the late 1970s, he purchased most of his former group of brands back from Beatrice and reformed Harman International Industries, which then acquired additional professional, consumer, and automotive audio companies such as UREI, Soundcraft, AKG, Crown International, Mark Levinson, Harman Motive, and Becker. He also repurchased Harman/Kardon, which Beatrice had sold to Shin-Shirasuna prior to his leaving the government. Harman International became the largest American-based supplier of consumer and professional audio equipment.

Sidney Harman's interests, though, were considerably broader than audio. He was deeply involved in the civil rights struggles during the 1960s, and he cofounded and taught at an independent school in Virginia established to counter all-white academies that replaced the public schools closed to avoid compliance with federal law. In the 1970s, he was president of Friends World College, an experimental Quaker school.

In later years, his activities included trusteeships of the Martin Luther King Center for Social Change, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, the National Symphony Orchestra (Washington, D.C.), the Aspen Institute, Freedom House, and the California Institute of Technology. He chaired the Executive Committees of the Public Agenda Foundation and the Board of Business Executives for National Security. He was a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, and the Council on Competitiveness, and was a member of the Board of the Leadership Institute of the University of Southern California, where he was presidential professor of business. He founded and was the first chairman of the Academy for Polymathic Study at USC.

His philanthropy included the Shakespeare Theater Company in Washington, D.C.,

where he funded Sidney Harman Hall, and endowments of writer-in-residence programs at the Aspen Institute and Baruch College, his alma mater.

Sidney Harman maintained an active role in Harman International until 2008, when he retired as chairman of the board. In 2010 he purchased Newsweek Magazine and merged it with The Daily Beast website; he was very involved in the operation until weeks before his death when his cancer was discovered.

He is survived by his wife, Jane Harman, former member of Congress from California's 36th District and current president of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, their two children, and four children from his earlier marriage.

Harman was an Honorary Member of the Audio Engineering Society.

I had the privilege of working for and with Sidney Harman for 15 years. His literate speaking, his encyclopedic memory, and his wit were unparalleled. He is truly irreplaceable.

Garry Margolis