



Edward William Firstenberg

January 22, 1913 - August 21, 2010

With deep sadness, the Firstenberg Family announced the death of the founder of First Independent Bank and community philanthropist E.W. Firstenberg on Saturday, August 21, 2010. He was 97 years old. Born in 1913, E.W. grew up in Seattle, Washington. He was a hard working, goal driven youth who always wanted to be a banker but, after earning an MBA from the University of Washington during the Great Depression, he took a job teaching high school business classes. That exposure fueled his lifelong passion for supporting education. In 1936, E.W. joined Ridgefield State Bank as Assistant Cashier. With an eye for innovation and a focus on exceptional customer service, he helped grow the bank to \$1 million in assets by 1944, purchasing shares of bank stock as he was able. In 1950, he purchased the bank outright and, over the next several decades, nurtured its dramatic growth as First Independent. He relocated the bank's headquarters to Vancouver, expanded its branch network and was the first to introduce SW Washington to customer-friendly services such as drive-up banking, extended branch hours, Certificates of Deposit, ATMs and a shopping mall branch office. E.W. retired as Chairman of the Board in 2005 after 69 years with the bank, but continued to staff a desk and serve customers in a branch office at The Waterford Retirement Center for several years. E.W. was preceded in death by his wife, Mary, who died in 2009. They were married 72 years. Through the Firstenberg Family Foundation, which they established, the Firstenbergs' philanthropy has been felt in all corners of SW Washington. The Firstenberg Community

Center, Firstenburg Patient Tower at SW Washington Medical Center, the Mary Firstenburg Family Center at Innovative Services NW, and the Firstenburg Student Commons at WSU Vancouver demonstrate the commitment E.W. and Mary had to their community. E.W. and Mary were world travelers. They enjoyed hiking, biking and boating with family and friends. E.W. Firstenburg is survived by three children, seven grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. Bill Firstenburg, of Woodland, is the CEO and Chairman of the Board of First Independent Bank, and son Bruce E. Firstenburg, of Vancouver, chairs the bank's holding company, First Independent Investment Group. Daughter Joyce Chiles, of Goldendale, is a Director Emeritus of the bank. E.W. is also survived by daughters-in-law Diane Firstenburg and Jeanne Firstenburg, and son-in-law Paul Chiles. Remembrance Books are available to sign at all 19 First Independent branches.

Tribute Wall



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Evergreen Memorial Gardens - July 03, 2025 at 09:57 PM