

## &gt; OBITUARY

# Reg Pollard had a heart for glass

Co-founder of Pollard Windows Inc. lauded as 'a legend' in the industry while keeping family close

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Window king Reg Pollard can trace his success to a window of opportunity.

Working with his parents Norman and Frances in building prefab garden sheds, garages and summer cottages in the late 1940s, the family received a request from a customer.

"Someone came to us and asked for storm windows," Pollard told *The Spectator* in 2012. "So we said, 'We'll try.'"

The next summer, a customer asked if they could make some house windows, and they were off and running.

They founded Pollard Windows Inc. in 1948, one of Burlington's most prominent industries. It employs as many as 300 people and sells products in different parts of Canada and the United States (COVID-19 caused the firm to lay off a third of its workforce earlier this year, but they are back to strength now).

By 2012, the firm, which also makes doors, had captured about 15 per cent of the Ontario market share and, in 2013, it's estimated it made more than 200,000 windows.

Pollard, who was described as "a legend" by the Canadian Fenestration group, died August 5 at 91.

The family began its business in a garage on Maple Avenue, with \$250 in capital. It was across from where the Mapleview Centre now stands. Pollard told *The Spectator* that in the early days he would measure and make windows at a home site, running up and down a ladder to install it.

In 1955, the family paid \$5,000 for a property on King Road and built its first plant. The site, near Hwy. 403, now has a 30,000-square-foot building that includes computer controlled glass cutting equipment and a R&D facility.

Pollard was a founding member of the Canadian Window and Door Association and was awarded the group's Pioneer Award in 2009. In 1966, he

helped write the window specs for Canada with several other industry associates.

Pollard even wrote a 2011 book that played on the chance that fell his family's way. It was called "A window of opportunity: How passion and determination grew a family business."

Pollard kept his eye on the ball in building the business, but also followed what competitors were doing. He was known as a bit of a raconteur, regularly talking with employees by walking around the plant floor, or in later years riding in a golf cart.

"Staying in business takes a lot of stick-to-itiveness," he told *The Spec*. "You need to have a healthy respect for what you have and a healthy fear that you can lose it. Don't ever think you've got it made. If you think that, forget it."

He said ethics was important, and related a time he made a misstep and quickly corrected it when he became aware of it.

"A young guy once told me I didn't need to back putty the windows, all you need is some glue stuff," he recalled.

"I got sucked in and bought it. Three months later this customer called and said, 'Mr. Pollard, the funniest thing happened. I went to clean my windows and the pane fell out.' I said, 'We'll be out to fix that.' I took my guys and told them to go to every house we sold (to) and fix them. You have to do these kinds of things."

His daughter Karen, part of the third generation now running Pollard, said her father was an inspiration to her.

"He was a gentleman who was honest and fair and had a deep love for his family and all those who worked for him."

Reginald Norman Pollard was born June 4, 1929 in Yorkshire, England. He was one of three children born to Norman, a carpenter, and Frances Pollard. Reg Pollard had been a classics student at a grammar school in Coventry, but quit when he was about 16.

His family came to Canada in



THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR FILE PHOTO

Three generations of Pollards pose for *The Spectator* in 1998: Rear, left to right, Gary Pollard, Reg Pollard, Mike Pollard. Front, left to right, Karen Pollard-Josling and Frances Pollard.

1947 and went to Hamilton. His family was interviewed on the radio because of their status of being newly arrived immigrants. Pollard told *The Spec* the family soon moved to Burlington when a man who owned an onion farm invited them to stay with them.

"So that's how I ended up as a classical student working in an onion field and that's how we ended up on Maple Avenue," he said.

His father Norman died in 1972 and Frances died in 2003. Pollard served as company president until he retired in 1994, when son Michael took the post. Pollard, however, still came into the business every day.

Michael Pollard died suddenly in August, 2013 after undergoing heart surgery. Karen became CEO and president and

brother Gary became director of business development.

In 2012, Reg Pollard received the Entrepreneur of the Year from the Burlington Economic Development Corporation. He is recognized in a display at Burlington City Hall.

Also that year he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal. He was active in the Anglican church, receiving the Order of Niagara in 2005, and played rugby, cricket, soccer and golf. He recorded two holes-in-one.

Pollard is survived by his wife of 65 years, Carol, son Gary, daughter Karen, sisters June, Audrey and seven grandchildren. He was predeceased by son Michael and grandson Curtis.

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