

EDWARD O. GERHARDY

Edward O. Gerhardy, died Wednesday, October 11, 1995, in Milwaukee and was buried from St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in River Hills. Gerhardy was 90 and died of natural causes. He had been a prominent civic leader in Milwaukee and was the president of Hansen Glove Corporation when it was one of the largest in the nation.

Gerhardy became president in 1938 of the firm that had been founded in 1871 by his grandfather, O.C. Hansen. Fifteen years after he headed the firm it was producing more than three and a half million pairs of gloves. In addition to the factory in Merrill, Hansen Glove had plants at Kiel and Clintonville, Wisconsin and at Ironwood, Michigan. The company closed its doors in 1970 after the women's dress glove market declined markedly in the sixties. Those years of bouffant hairdos saw women's hat, purse and glove markets disappear.

Like most industries during World War II, the company retooled to aid the war effort. Hansen glove made electrically heated gloves, and reverse lambskin mittens with trigger fingers used by gunners in the open bays of B-17's. The company was honored by the Underwear Institute for its work in clothing American servicemen. Gerhardy was sent to Europe by the U.S. government to help rehabilitate the glove and clothing industries of France, Germany and Belgium.

Gerhardy, who visited the Merrill plant occasionally, was primarily involved in sales and marketing for the glove manufacturer. Bill Martens was involved in the transition from Hansen Glove, to Parker Pen to Midwest Outwear to Fox Point Sportswear.

Hansen Glove operated first in the Sixth Ward, then in what became Mike Wendt's Merrill Sheet Metal (now Northern Radiator Service) and then in 1961 the new plant was built. It's now occupied for the last 20 years by John Bocke's Fox Point Sportswear, Inc.

Martens remembers Gerhardy always had a fond memory of his dealings with the people of Merrill, especially the city officials he worked with when coming to Merrill and when building the structure on what was highway 17.

Older Merrillites and especially former Hansen Glove employees may remember Gerhardy and local managers Don Sanborn, Frank London, Gaylord Renz and Floyd Merkel.

Gerhardy is survived by a son, Edward T. Gerhardy of Madison, Connecticut and a daughter, Susan Gebhardt of Mequon, Wisconsin. FN95L4