

Edward N. Claughton, Jr.

Written by Karen Ventrone
Monday, 09 September 2013 15:30

Edward N. Claughton Jr, one of early Miami's pioneers, died September 7, 2013 peacefully at home in North Carolina with family by his side. A distinguished businessman born July 27, 1927, Claughton was a prominent real estate developer who engineered some of Miami's most notable land deals. Claughton, husband and father of three was also a civic minded contributor to many community organizations and founding member of several clubs and business associations.

Known for his magic tricks and passion for entertaining children and families every 4th of July at his Silver Sands motel on Key Biscayne, Claughton's zeal for life was evident. "He was a character" says son, Edward "Chip" Claughton III. Ed Jr. orchestrated the annual coin toss and greased watermelon pool games at Silver Sands every summer. The Silver Sands served as the backdrop for many families' memories including the Claughtons. A once popular Miami hotspot known for the Eagle's Nest bar and a restaurant with water that would cascade down the windows with the flick of a switch, the Silver Sands was but just one of many business ventures engineered by Claughton.

Son of Edward Sr. and Lilian Corbett, Edward Claughton Jr. graduated from Miami Senior High, Class of 1945 and went on to join the U.S. Navy, working on a minesweeper for 2 years. Graduating with a B.A. from Duke University in 1950, Claughton then obtained his law degree from the University of Florida Law School in 1953. From 1953-1965 Claughton served as a U.S. Air Force Reservist, 2nd Lieutenant.

After graduating from law school he joined the family business, Claughton Theaters, a chain of movie theaters in Miami subsequently bought out by Wometco. He then served on the Board of Directors for Chicago & Eastern Illinois Railroad as the youngest of the group, often becoming so nervous at the board meetings in a "room full of old guys he would get sick to his stomach" says wife, Lois.

His most notable accomplishment is perhaps Claughton Island, on which today sits the development known as Brickell Key. Claughton contended, in court, that it wasn't just the land above the water that was being purchased, it was the land below as well. His successful argument led to building the island's bulkhead and installing a bridge which now sits at the end of Southwest 8th street off Brickell Avenue in Miami.

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Over the years, Claughton sold parcels of the island to Swire Properties and also negotiated a complex land swap in order to acquire Hound Ears Club, a private golf resort in North Carolina.

Several parcels of land in downtown Miami were once owned by Claughton including the old Urmev Hotel. Once famous among those who worked in downtown as the after work gathering place, the Urmev was the site where Claughton once delivered a baby for a hotel guest.

Claughton moved to Hound Ears in 1988 with wife Lois whom he married in 1976. Lois and Ed led a life of adventure and compassion for others. Lois recalls the stories of Ed's capers including the one when he and friends Lester Johnson, Tom Guyton and Fred Kirtland dressed up as waiters on a boat chartered for the Apollo 11 astronauts and Vice President Spiro Agnew in celebration of the upcoming launch. Claughton took on the role of head bartender and served the V.P. and Apollo astronauts only to convince the actual crew of the boat to let him stay on overnight to see the launch the following day.

Ed was a compassionate person, often stopping to greet anyone and everyone around him. No matter who it was or where they came from, Claughton paid people attention. He would light up the room. From the busboy in the restaurant to President Reagan whom he entertained to Spiro Agnew who once stayed in his home, Claughton was a people person.

Adored by his employees, he was considered a great boss and friend by those who worked for him. John Kilby, hired in 1972 as general manager of the Silver Sands, said "Mr. Claughton was a generous and kind man and, as we would say in England, 'a Hail fellow, well met'. He had a personality, a real presence about him; the best boss I have had in my working life".

Claughton knew just about every employee in Hounds Ears and considered each a friend, stopping to greet them throughout the day. He would often stop his round of golf to walk over and say hi to the greens keepers, knowing the details of each one's family.

Claughton's commitment to his faith and the community was strong, serving as a Deacon at Granada Presbyterian Church in Coral Gables from 1972-1977. He was the President of the American Cancer Society in 1962 and sat on its Board of Directors from 1961-1988. He also served on the Board of Directors for the Brickell Area Association, Baptist Hospital, Junior Achievement of Miami, Miami Kiwanis Club, United Fund, United States Business & Industrial

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Council and the University of Miami Citizens Board. He also served on the Dade County Citizens Safety Council, Miami-Dade Chamber of Commerce, Governor's Advisory Committee, State-Wide Anti-Crime Task Force and the Orange Bowl Committee. Claughton was a founding member of the University Club, Coral Reef Yacht Club and the Elk River Club in North Carolina, serving as its first President.

Claughton will be sorely missed by many, especially his wife and family. He is survived by wife Lois, daughters Lee Taylor and Jeanie Claughton, son Edward III, grandchildren Edward N. Claughton IV, Wyatt Claughton, Caroline Claughton, Charles Hyatt, Priscilla Hyatt, sister Suzanne Schmidt, son-in-law Russ Taylor, daughters-in-law Kelly Claughton and Marjorie Hyatt and many nieces and nephews.

Mr. Claughton was preceded in death by his parents Edward Claughton, Sr. and Lillian Corbett Claughton, and one son Charles G. "Chuck" Hyatt.

Funeral services for Edward N. Claughton, Jr. will be conducted Tuesday afternoon, September 10, 2013, at 2 pm, at the First Presbyterian Church of Boone, North Carolina. The body will lie in state, at the church, from 1:00 until 2:00 o'clock. Officiating will be Reverend Joel Long and Reverend Jacob Willis. Burial will follow in Mount Lawn Memorial Park and Gardens.

A reception will follow the graveside service at the Hound Ears Club.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, Western Carolina Chapter, 3800 Shamrock Drive, Charlotte, North Carolina, 28215-3220.

Condolences may be sent to: Lois Claughton, Care of Hound Ears Club, PO Box 188 Blowing Rock, North Carolina, 28605, or online at www.hamptonfuneralinc.com.

Hampton Funeral and Cremation Service, in Boone, North Carolina, is in charge of arrangements.