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LOWELL 'BUD' PAXSON 1935-2015

Media mogul was founder of HSN

By Shannon Donnelly
Palm Beach Daily News



Bud Paxson's PAX-TV later became the Ion network.

Lowell "Bud" Paxson, a lifelong radio and television entrepreneur who launched the shop-by-TV industry, died Friday at his home in Montana. The former Palm Beach resident was 79.

Born on April 17, 1935, in Rochester, N.Y., he was the son of Donald and Maybelle Paxson.

His affinity for the entertainment business made itself known early in his life. He was the star of "Kiddie-Go-Round," a local radio show, at 14. Not long after his graduation from Syracuse University, when he was still in his early 20s, he acquired his first radio station, WACK. He would acquire scores more.

In 1977, a client at Paxson's WWQT-AM station in Clearwater, unable to pay his advertising bill, offered 118 avocado-green electric can openers as payment. Paxson, who had a payroll to meet the next day, went on the air to announce that he would sell a \$30 can opener for \$10 to

anyone who would come to the station with cash in hand. He sold all 118 in three hours and sparked the idea for direct-to-consumer on-air marketing.

In 1982, Paxson and his business partner, Roy Speer, launched the Home Shopping Club, later renamed the Home Shopping Network. By 1985, HSN was grossing \$1 billion annually. Paxson left HSN in 1991 to form Paxson Communications Corp. Barry Diller bought HSN in 1996.

HSN's Twitter feed noted Paxson's passing: "We are deeply saddened by the death of HSN founder Lowell 'Bud' Paxson — a true retail pioneer. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family."

Paxson Communications Corp. acquired more radio, television and media properties and provided a platform

from which Paxson lobbied tirelessly for local broadcast television while facing down the Big Three networks and cable companies. He was the engine behind the landmark "must-carry" language in the 1992 Cable Act and the 1996 Telecommunications Act.

The National Association of Broadcasters announced Paxson's death in a statement released Monday morning.

"Broadcasters have lost a friend and a legend in the passing of Bud Paxson," said Gordon Smith, NAB president. "He was a tenacious advocate for over-the-air radio and television."

Paxson sold his radio stations to Clear Channel for \$700 million and used the money to establish, with Dean Goodman, PAX-TV, with headquarters in West Palm Beach. It later became the Ion network.

Paxson was the recipient of numerous awards including the Worldwide Electronic Marketing Association's Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Florida Entrepreneur

of the Year Award.

He was a member of the Broadcast and Cable Hall of Fame.

Paxson moved to Palm Beach with his wife and family in the early 1990s. They bought Casa Nana, the former Woolworth Donahue home on South Ocean Boulevard, which was built for tea heir George Rasmussen by Addison Mizner. Paxson sold it in 2003.

In Palm Beach, Paxson was a supporter of Place of Hope, the Lupus Foundation and the Republican Party. In 2004, Paxson hosted a reception for President George W. Bush that raised more than \$1 million.

In addition to his wife, Marla, Paxson is survived by his children, Todd, Devon, Julie and Nicole; a daughter-in-law, Dorian; and grandchildren Riley, Talon, Levi, Dakota, Austin and Colton.

Services will be at 4 p.m. Jan. 22 at Christ Fellowship Church in Palm Beach Gardens. A reception will follow at 6 p.m. at The Breakers.

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