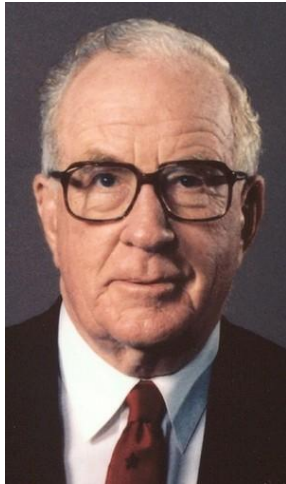


## VICS Mourns the Loss of One of Its Own

### Roger Milliken (1915-2010)

**Roger Milliken**, who led Milliken & Company for 71 years, during which it grew to become the world's largest privately owned textile and chemical manufacturer, died December 30, 2010 in Spartanburg, aged ninety-five.



Roger Milliken was born October 24, 1915, in New York City, the eldest son of Gerrish and Agnes (Gayley) Milliken. He graduated from Yale University in 1937, and immediately entered business. Mr. Milliken didn't start in the executive suite, but instead worked as a "follow-up boy" in the New York office of Mercantile Stores, in which his family had an ownership stake. There he made the rounds of suppliers, seeing to it that coats and suits ordered by the stores were delivered. He, at times, pinned up the hems of women's coats, all the while learning the business from the ground up.

In 1941, he was given the stewardship of three small woolen mills in Maine. When his father died in 1947, the 32-year-old succeeded him as president.

In 1954, Mr. Milliken and his family moved to Spartanburg, South Carolina, beginning a long and productive association with the people of the Palmetto State. Both Mr. and Mrs. Milliken moved into active community service. Mr. Milliken also served on other corporate and nonprofit boards, including: Arthur D. Little, Westinghouse, Citicorp, Mercantile, W.R. Grace; and Institute of Textile Technology, The Heritage Foundation, the Greenville-Spartanburg Airport Commission, and the Spartanburg Day School.

One of the last in the tradition of those great industrialists who built America's manufacturing success, during his seven decades as the leader of Milliken & Company, Mr. Milliken expanded the business from a handful of plants to 50 manufacturing facilities in 7 countries. Mr. Milliken lived by ideas and principles from which he never wavered. He believed that America's manufacturing leadership was the foundation of his nation's economic achievement.

A member of both the National and the South Carolina Business Halls of Fame, Mr. Milliken was repeatedly recognized as the 20th-century's greatest leader in American textiles because of the technological and workforce innovations Milliken & Company brought to the industry. To help protect the American worker, in 1983 Mr. Milliken launched the nationally known "Crafted with Pride in the U.S.A." advertising campaign, which aimed to control the flood of textile imports that were threatening the U.S. textile and apparel industry.

In 1989 the Northern Textile Association presented him with its [Silver Medal](#) and again honored him in 1999 with its [Lifetime Achievement Award](#). That same year Textile World Magazine (December 1999) named him Leader of the Century. In April 2000, he was inducted into the National Business Hall of Fame. In 2001 the [American Textile History Museum](#) inducted him into the Textile Hall of Fame, at which time he delivered this [Acceptance Speech](#) which was gratefully received by many in the American textile industry. On April 15, 2008, Roger Milliken was presented with the [American Manufacturing Trade Action Coalition](#) (AMTAC) [American Manufacturing Visionary Award](#).

Of the various factors that helped Mr. Milliken grow the company, none was more important than his dedication to quality and process control. Early on, he recognized the value of Dr. W. Edwards Deming's work in Japan. By following the tenets, "Good is the enemy of best, and best is the enemy of better," and "The largest room in the world is the room for improvement," Mr. Milliken took the company on a decades-long journey that elevated its quality standards to the point where the entire company was awarded, in 1989, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. Milliken & Company has also received the European Quality Award and the Japanese TPM (Total Productive Maintenance) Excellence Award, making it the only company in the world to have won all three awards.

It was Mr. Milliken's dedication to quality in manufacturing that helped keep Milliken & Company competitive against lower-cost suppliers outside the U.S. It also helped to preserve thousands of American jobs that otherwise would have likely been lost.

Along with dedication to quality, Mr. Milliken understood the importance of safeguarding the lives of company workers. When a devastating fire burned to the ground the massive Live Oak carpet manufacturing plant in LaGrange, Georgia, in 1995, Mr. Milliken showed up the next day and committed to rebuild "starting tomorrow" and to have the plant up and operating again within six months, a promise that was kept. He also assured the plant's 700 associates, none of whom were injured, that Milliken & Company would keep them employed in the meantime. When some of them transferred temporarily to Milliken plants abroad, he arranged for video teleconference calls for them to talk to their families.

In 2008 Business Week listed Milliken & Company as one of the "Best Places to Launch a Career" and in 2009 FORTUNE magazine named it, for the fifth time, one of the "100 Best Companies to Work For."

Mr. Milliken was well known for his support of Republican causes and candidates, particularly those who favored small government and the protection of American jobs. After moving to Spartanburg in 1953, Mr. Milliken became an integral part of the rise of the Republican Party in the South. Long before the Republican Party gained a foothold in what was then a traditionally Democratic state, he worked on the grass-roots level to organize Republican precincts. From 1956 to 1984, he served as a delegate from South Carolina to eight Republican National Conventions. He successfully urged Barry Goldwater to run for President. Milliken was also a significant supporter of William F. Buckley, Jr., and his flagship magazine, National Review.

His support of Republican policy was not unequivocal, however. When Ross Perot ran for President opposing NAFTA, Mr. Milliken became a prominent supporter. He understood that there would be a huge cost to the offshoring of American manufacturing. Believing in the foundational value of a strong middle class, he made every attempt to shift U.S. policy away from free trade to fair trade. On this issue, he worked closely with Democrats.

The American worker and conservative politics were not the only arenas in which Mr. Milliken focused his leadership. Roger Milliken was also an environmental steward long before the term "green" was fashionable. Sustainability has long been a watchword at Milliken & Company and was acted on in tangible ways, as the company pursued exemplary recycling and emissions- and waste-reduction programs which led to its current carbon-negative status. The company diverts 99.98% of all the company's waste away from landfills and to places where it can be reused, recycled, or converted to energy. Milliken and Company has reduced its rate of water usage by over 50% since 1991.

Mr. Milliken's ties to South Carolina were long and deep. The legacy he leaves behind is well illustrated by the vision and initiative he displayed in helping to build the Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport, which then played a

major role in attracting new business to the region, including BMW's only manufacturing plant in North America and Michelin's North American headquarters.

Mr. Milliken was also passionately dedicated to education, particularly in local schools. He was instrumental in the founding of the Spartanburg Day School in 1957, and served as a trustee and benefactor of the school until his death. He was also a long-time trustee of Wofford College in Spartanburg. Thanks in large part to Mr. Milliken's vision and support, in 2002 the entire Wofford campus was designated a National Arboretum, which in 2008 was renamed the Roger Milliken Arboretum. Also in 2008, Wofford College named Mr. Milliken Trustee Emeritus and established Roger Milliken Day to be observed each year with a tree-planting ceremony.

Nita, Mr. Milliken's wife of 55 years, died in 2003. He is survived by five children and nine grandchildren.

Roger Milliken wanted his epitaph to read, simply, "Builder." And so it will. And so he was, in countless ways.

In 1987, VICS commemorated the achievements of Roger Milliken by creating the Roger Milliken Lifetime Achievement Award. Each year, the Roger Milliken Lifetime Achievement Award is presented as the top honor at the VICS Collaborative Commerce Achievement Awards ceremony. The VICS Roger Milliken Lifetime Achievement Award is one of the most prestigious awards a businessperson can receive. It honors the leadership and outstanding contributions of an individual who has advanced the entire industry over his or her entire career to date.

2010 marked the first time the award was presented to two individuals – Timothy P. Smucker, Chairman of the Board and Co-CEO of The J.M. Smucker Company, and Danny Wegman, CEO of Wegmans Food Markets.