

Trailblazing broker Mildred C. Hanson, 68

By JAY LEVIN
STAFF WRITER

Mildred C. Hanson of Hackensack, a tenacious and trailblazing broker who made her name in the male-dominated commercial real estate field, died Thursday. She was 68.

The cause was cancer, said her husband of nearly 25 years, Peter Hanson.

Mrs. Hanson, a specialist in office and industrial sales and leasing, was senior vice president of Hackensack-based NAI James E. Hanson, a commercial real estate firm founded by Peter Hanson's father in 1955.

During her 34-year career, she brokered deals valued at more than \$800 million.



HANSON

"Millie was the leader of women in the commercial real estate world in New Jersey," said a longtime competitor, Charles Klatskin, chief executive of Lee & Klatskin Associates in Hasbrouck Heights.

"She got holes in the soles of shoes by working so hard. The men looked up to her."

A native of Jersey City, Mrs. Hanson worked in residential real estate when she was a young mother. Weary of the evening and weekend hours, and knowing that 9-to-5 was more the norm in commercial real estate, she applied to James E. Hanson in 1973.

"Needless to say, that was new territory for her and for us," said Peter Hanson, chairman of NAI James E. Hanson.

"There weren't any women in this part of the country doing commercial real estate."

Within six months, she was closing deals.

"Millie really learned this business, and knew it cold," Klatskin said.

Among the largest deals Mrs. Hanson brokered was Mass Mutual's sale of 88 acres of Weehawken waterfront to Hartz Mountain Industries in the 1980s.

Five years ago, the magazine Real Estate New Jersey included Mrs. Hanson on its list of the top 10 women in the industry and said she was responsible for closing more than 600,000 square feet of transactions in 2001 alone.

In 1989, Mrs. Hanson described to The Record the barriers that women faced in her industry. She said that when she was

a new broker, a man looking to lease industrial space told her that he would never deal with her.

"He didn't think women knew anything about boilers, tailgate loading docks, floor loads, power sources and stuff like that," Mrs. Hanson said.

After the man had repeatedly ignored Mrs. Hanson's telephone calls, she had a male colleague show the man several properties. He eventually leased one — not knowing it was Mrs. Hanson who found it for him.

Mrs. Hanson was the first woman president of both the New Jersey chapter of the Society of Industrial and Office Realtors and the Industrial and Office Real Estate Brokers Association of the New York Metropolitan Area.

Succeeded in male-dominated commercial real estate field

In addition to her husband, she is survived by daughters Nina Berman of Manhattan and Carmel Robinson of Milford, Conn.; stepdaughters Kathryn Hanson of Mount Laurel and Stacy Fridley of West Nyack, N.Y.; stepson William Hanson of Mahwah, the president of NAI James E. Hanson; brothers Joseph Ferrando of Middletown and John Ferrando of Clark; a sister, Nina Formisano of Teaneck; and 13 grandchildren.

The visitation is Wednesday, from 3 to 5 and 7 to 9 p.m., at the Frank A. Patti and Kenneth Mikatarian Funeral Home in Fort Lee.

The funeral Mass will be Thursday at 10 a.m. at Historic Madonna R.C. Church on the Hill in Fort Lee. Entombment will be in Madonna Mausoleum in Fort Lee.

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