

DENNIS SCHLABACH, of Denco, dies at 84

Industry loses “a quiet man with a loud spirit”

Editor's note:

Dennis Schlabach, president and founder of Denco, passed away on October 21, 2021, at age 84, after a brave battle with Parkinson's Disease. Our industry lost an entrepreneur, businessman, motivational speaker, and, based upon comments from those who knew him best, an all-around good person.



Milestones

Dennis E. Schlabach was born in Berlin, Ohio, on May 31, 1937. As a young adult, he held several jobs, including working at a meat processing plant, driving a bread truck, and washing cars at Village Motors. While selling cars, he met Emanuel Mullet of Wayne Door, and the rest is history.

Schlabach joined Wayne Door as a salesman in 1960 and began a successful career in the garage door industry; an industry in which he achieved professional and personal triumphs, and, most importantly, where he made lifelong friendships.

In 1967, Schlabach founded Denco Marketing, a wholesale distributor of garage door and gate supplies. Under his leadership, Denco grew from two employees to a staff of 27, from representing one manufacturer to over 110, and from warehousing space of two 12' x 26' storage units to over 9,200 square feet of dedicated warehouse space.

“His customers knew they could depend on his honesty and integrity, his ability to

follow through and serve their needs, and a good joke or two when he called their business,” said Kathy Schlabach.

Known by association

An active member of the International Door Association (IDA), Schlabach served on the board of directors from 1996 to 2001 and also served as treasurer for over five years. He was also a founding contributor to the IDA Scholarship Fund.

Former Managing Director of IDEA and IDA Todd Thomas said, “Dennis seemed to give away more products than he sold. His generosity knew no bounds. He personified generosity.” Thomas said that Schlabach

was not only generous with products, but he was also generous with his time, sharing ideas and strategies, as well as mentoring those new to the industry. He wrote and produced the Successful Business Images program, specifically designed for door dealerships.

Schlabach was a loving husband, dad, grandfather, and friend. He enjoyed golfing and traveling, and he was a lifelong Cleveland Browns and Indians fan. He was 11 the last time the Indians won a national championship, but he never gave up the hope they would do it again.

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Dennis and Kathy

Dennis and his wife, Kathy, navigated the Parkinson's journey together for many years, never giving up. Their love continues to inspire their children and grandchildren.

Dennis will be remembered by his wife Kathy, children Steve, Bobbi, Aemie, grandchildren Jim, Clay, Cole, Aerie, Frankie, Sumney, Mia, great-granddaughter Sophie, siblings, extended family, friends, and the entire Denco family.

To share a memory or story of Dennis, please email jodi@dencodoorstuff.com. Donations in Dennis' memory may be made to the Dennis & Kathy Schlabach Scholarship c/o Holmes County Education Foundation, 114 N. Clay Street, Millersburg, OH 44654. ■

REMEMBERING DENNIS SCHLABACH

"Without Dennis we would not have our business. He helped us and believed in our products from the very first day. That was 16 years ago." —Jim and Judy Best, *Magnaflex*

"I have never known of anyone to speak ill of Denco and that in itself speaks loudly. In a business, the tip of the spear, so to speak, dictates the values, attitudes, and actions of the entire company. Mr. Schlabach did it right." —Steve Walterreit, *Unique Supply & Repair*

"Dennis was our first sales representative when he was with Wayne Door. He delivered our first order of doors personally so he could introduce himself. His character and kindness will truly be missed." —Harry and Dorothea Helton, *Helton Overhead Door Sales*

"We have worked with and known Dennis for 40 years. He was always very loved and respected. He also did wonders for the door industry to make it what it is today ... Dennis will be missed by all his peers." —Butch and Rich Martin, *Martin Door Company*

"I could tell stories about Dennis for days and never run out of material. He was a comic when the situation called for laughter, a mentor when someone needed encouragement, and a dear friend every minute of every day." —Todd Thomas, *American Fence Association*

"He was a quiet man, but he had a loud spirit." —Tyler Miller, *Denco*



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