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JAMES GARY / 1920-2004

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Honolulu Gas Co. CEO was a pioneer in oil

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Businessman James Frederick Gary, who grew the Honolulu Gas Co. into a Fortune 500 oil, gas, energy and shipping company, died yesterday at his home in Kahala. He was 83.

Gary had been in failing health for some time, said Andrea Simpson, a family friend and former employee.

Born in Chicago, Gary began his Hawaii business career as chairman, president and chief executive in 1967 of what was then Honolulu Gas Co. He founded its parent holding company, Pacific Resources Inc., in 1971 and built the Hawaiian Independent Refinery, which later was BHP Hawaii and now is Tesoro Hawaii.

U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye, who knew Gary for nearly four decades, said Hawaii was fortunate to have Gary guide it during an important period in its history.

"Jim Gary was both a visionary business executive and an outstanding community leader who played a vital role in Hawaii's transformation from a quiet, moonlit tourist destination to a bustling, international business center," Inouye said.

"Through his tireless hard work, he ended Hawaii's dependence on imported petroleum by establishing a refinery in the islands that became a key supplier for the Department of Defense in the Pacific," Inouye said. "As a member of the University of Hawaii's Board of Regents, he was a strong advocate for higher education and high technology."

Simpson, former PRI vice president of corporate communication, said Gary foresaw the economic future of Hawaii and worked with Govs.

John Burns and George Ariyoshi, U.S. Rep. Patsy Mink and Inouye to bring the refinery to Hawaii.

"It was one of the great economic engines for Hawaii in the late 20th century and even today, though under different auspices," Simpson said. "I had great respect for him. He was an extremely ethical man."

Under Gary's leadership the PRI companies grew to \$1.7 billion in yearly sales from \$18 million.

"For those of us who worked for him in the PRI era, when it was Hawaii's only Fortune 500 company, it was like Brigadoon ... a shining place in time that has now completely changed."

Gary served for many years on the boards of Bank of Hawaii, Castle & Cooke, Dole Food, Theo Davies, Brewer Pacific and other corporations.

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"Jim Gary was one of Hawaii's most influential businessmen for many years," said Larry Johnson, former chairman and CEO of Bank of Hawaii. "He served on the board of Bank of Hawaii for 21 years and always provided me with expert guidance and counsel. He was a man of high integrity, honesty and character and touched the lives of many throughout his active life. He will be missed by all of his business associates, friends and family."

An acknowledged international business adviser and energy expert, he was active in a number of petroleum industry and U.S. and international trade associations, Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, Hawaii Business Roundtable and the Better Business Bureau.

Henry Clark, a former chairman of Castle & Cooke, said working with Gary on the board of directors gave Clark the opportunity to witness firsthand Gary's business foresight.

"He's another one of those gentlemen who's lost and gone, and we'll suffer for it," Clark said. "His stature was such that we can't afford to lose it in this state. Besides that, he was a great family man."

Gary received a B.S. degree from Haverford College in Pennsylvania in 1942, served in the Army for four years and worked for Seattle Gas Co. and Washington Natural Gas Co. before moving to Hawaii in 1967.

Gary is survived by wife Helen, twin sons James Scott and John William, daughter Mary Anne Vient, brothers Joseph and Rex, sister Mary Hanlon and seven grandchildren. Another son, David Frederick, predeceased him. Services are pending.

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