



SOUTH CAROLINA HALL OF FAME



Correlation with South Carolina Standards

Roger Milliken



South Carolina Social Studies Standards

Roger Milliken

Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries-A New Economic Landscape

Topics include – Industry, Textiles, Spartanburg, Milliken Breakfast Show, Wofford College, Converse College, Architecture, Landscaping, Green Space & Green Architecture, Greenville International Airport

Standard 8-7: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the impact on South Carolina of significant events of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

8-7.4 - Summarize key economic issues in present-day South Carolina, including the decline of the textile industry, the state's continuing right-to-work status, the changes in agricultural emphasis, the growing globalization and foreign investment, the influx of immigrants and migrants into the Sunbelt, the increased protection of the environment, the expanding number of cultural offerings, and the changes in tax policy.



S.C. Hall of Fame Biography

Roger Milliken



Located in Spartanburg, Milliken & Company is a major textile and chemical manufacturer, a Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award recipient, and home to the world's largest textile research facility. Born in New York and educated at Groton School and Yale, Roger Milliken has served as Chairman and CEO of this company. He was the first inductee to the American Textile Hall of Fame and was named Textile Leader of the Century. Known for his business foresight and vision he is also a passionate supporter of horticulture and the planting of noble trees. Milliken holds twelve honorary degrees and has been a generous benefactor to South Carolina.



Transcript

Roger Milliken

Milliken & Company

Narrator: Roger Milliken was born October 24th, 1915 in New York City. A graduate of Yale University, he majored in French language and literature. He went to work for Deering Milliken, a small northeastern textile company in 1937. When his father died, Milliken succeeded him as President of the company, moving to Spartanburg, South Carolina in 1954. (Historical photos)

Minor Mickel Shaw: At that point in our history, in the Greenville/Spartanburg area, and the whole upstate, of course, we were mostly textiles. And I think everybody knew... that we needed to diversify and have other industries in addition to textiles.

Narrator: Under his leadership, Milliken and Company became the world's largest privately owned textile and chemical manufacturer, known worldwide for research and development.

Roger Milliken was dedicated to making his employees' lives better, and he was a leading advocate of "quality control" in manufacturing.

Dr. Benjamin Dunlap: Crafted with pride, for him, meant that what his company produced was well designed, well made. But it went beyond that. It was a demonstration that "made in the USA" was a guarantee of quality. (Manufacturing)

His policy as a leader was to ask... to listen... and to decide.

He knew that everybody knew something he didn't know. And he would ask, and he would listen closely.

But finally, he had to make the decision. (Meetings, other business settings)

James L. Hamrick: He was a very straightforward person. I don't ever recall having too many issues where I couldn't get a "yes" or "no" answer.



He listened... and... if he thought it was a good idea, he said "Let's do it," and then he proceeded to provide the resources to get it done.

Dunlap: And detail... detail... detail. He knew you didn't make hasty decisions on a macro scale... without examining where the wastebaskets would go, where the electrical outlets should be located, details of that sort.

Shaw: Probably the most detailed person I've ever known. But he also was a "big picture" person. He was a true visionary.

He had a wonderful spirit; he had great enthusiasm, for whatever project he undertook.

Dunlap: He loved the company of thoughtful young people. (Students at Wofford)

And he realized that the most innovative minds were often those that were not necessarily restricted by what was practical, what was possible.

Shaw: One of the things that I remember most in my life is meeting Mr. Milliken when I was probably about twelve years old. I would go up to New York with my parents to the Milliken Breakfast Show. The Milliken company had a breakfast show, and that's how they advertised their new products. They put on an actual "Broadway Show" to advertise their products, and they brought their clients up to New York City. And that is when I met Mr. Milliken for the very first time. He was a very tall man and had red hair. Bright red hair. And later on in life I heard people called him "Big Red."

(Milliken Breakfast Show)

Dr. Elizabeth Fleming: He's a man of very tall stature. And that can be a little bit intimidating... But what I found in my experiences with him, was his towering presence was less about stature and posture and more about what the impact of commitment to excellence and a love of learning can have on those who are interested in engaging with you and being your friends.

Dunlap: He had a wonderful sense of humor, and if you knew anything at all, that he didn't know, he was eager to find out what it was. And so, conversation with him was always enormously invigorating.



Shaw: You also knew that if you went into a meeting with Mr. Milliken that he could “outlast” you in a meeting. So, you’d better be prepared before you went into the meeting because you would get tired, before he got tired.

Dunlap: And it was that energy, that avid interest in everything that was going on around him, that made him an absolutely unforgettable leader.

Environment

Dunlap: Roger Milliken actually had a very highly developed aesthetic sense. And it happened that both architecture and landscaping were the fields that most captured his imagination.

Any architect, who ever worked with him, knew his extraordinary eye for detail. His unbelievable perspicacity when it came to the way a structure would relate to its surroundings.

Fleming: We would often talk about great architects, great buildings, and I think that’s what brought us together in terms of the interest in “LEED” certified architecture and helping to build green environments, green space in the greater Spartanburg Community. (LEED buildings at Converse—Koon Hall, The Heath)

Hamrick: Of course he was a great tree planter. He planted trees all over the place.

Dunlap: He loved noble trees. And he founded the Noble Tree Foundation. And he loved planning the Wofford Campus as it grew and changed. (Arboretum)

Fleming: When I think about Mr. Milliken, I always think about green space and trees... how our trees, the different canopy of trees are being properly maintained, and properly added to, so that the green space was as important as the built space on our campus.

Greenville/Spartanburg area

Narrator: Milliken tirelessly pursued economic and educational development in the Greenville/Spartanburg area. (BMW)

Shaw: He understood the importance of aviation, the importance of a strong airport, and an international airport to a community, in order to generate business development.

(Greenville Spartanburg International Airport, Roger Milliken Field)



Dunlap: Roger Milliken was a trustee of this college, for 50 years... and undertook to make it the best small liberal arts college in the South. (Wofford)

Fleming: Roger Milliken's contributions to Converse College have been tremendous. I think most importantly about his curiosity, his love of earth, and his passion for excellence. Those three attributes have had a significant impact on the growth of this institution, its vision for excellence, as well as have made a significant impact on the lives of countless students. (Milliken Scholars Program started in 1978)

Dunlap: You understand immediately what Mr. Milliken's most indelible contribution was. It set the bar higher than it would have been for this community or any other, especially in the American South at that time. (Greenville revitalization)

I think it would be hard, for anyone, for many, many years, to live in this area, without being grateful to Mr. Milliken.

Conclusion

Narrator: Roger Milliken died December 30th, 2010. His epitaph reads, simply, "Builder." (Epitaph)

Hamrick: He was very generous. And... he was just a great man. That's my words for him...great man.



Credits

South Carolina Social Studies Standard Correlations were provided by Lisa Ray

The purpose of the [South Carolina Hall of Fame](#) is to recognize and honor both contemporary and past citizens who have made outstanding contributions to South Carolina's heritage and progress.

Funding for Knowitall.org was provided by the S. C. General Assembly through the K-12 Technology Initiative.

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