

Audio pioneer Sidney Harman dead at 92

April 13 2011



Sidney Harman (L) and Jane Harman pose for photographers at Kennedy Center Hall of States in Washington, DC, 2009. Sidney Harman, who bought Newsweek magazine last year and merged it with The Daily Beast website, died on Tuesday, his family announced. He was 92.

Audio pioneer Sidney Harman, who bought Newsweek magazine last year and merged it with The Daily Beast website, died on Tuesday. He was 92.

Harman, who was married to Jane Harman, a former member of the US House of Representatives from California, died in Washington of complications from acute myeloid leukemia, the Harman family said in a statement.

Harman, who was born in Montreal but grew up in New York, built a fortune estimated at \$500 million by Forbes magazine through Harman

International Industries, which makes high-quality audio and other products.

After majoring in physics at New York's City College, Harman joined the engineering department of David Bogen Co., a firm that made public-address sound systems, in 1939, according to his company biography.

Harman and Bogen chief engineer Bernard Kardon left the company in 1953 and put up \$5,000 to launch their own firm, Harman Kardon.

They produced the first FM tuner in 1953 and the first stereo receiver, the Festival TA230, in 1958.

Harman sold his share in Harman Kardon but bought it back and went on to acquire JBL, another maker of audio products.

Harman sold the company again -- to Beatrice Foods for around \$100 million -- in the 1970s to become the undersecretary of commerce in the administration of US president Jimmy Carter.

After leaving the administration, he bought Harman International back from Beatrice for \$55 million. Harman Kardon had been sold to a Japanese company in the meantime and Harman was only able to reacquire his flagship in 1985.

Harman became chairman emeritus of the company in 2008 and devoted much of his time and money to his philanthropic activities, which included the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington and the Aspen Institute think tank.

In a surprise move last year, Harman bought money-losing Newsweek from The Washington Post Co. for one dollar while also assuming the magazine's debts, estimated to be in the tens of millions of dollars.

Harman combined the magazine with news and blog site The Daily Beast and named Tina Brown, The Daily Beast founder and a former editor of The New Yorker, as editor-in-chief of the new media entity.

Harman was executive chairman of The Newsweek Daily Beast Co. at the time of his death.

Brown, in an obituary of Harman in The Daily Beast, described him as "a magical man, full of intellectual curiosity and a desire to see Newsweek reflect the pursuit of ideas.

"We very quickly formed both a great editorial relationship and a warm personal friendship," she said. "I shall miss him tremendously."

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