



Joseph A. Hardy III

EDITORS' NOTE Joseph Hardy III went from being a college student selling home-grown vegetables door-to-door to becoming the Founder and CEO of 84 Lumber Company, which is today the largest privately owned building materials supplier to professional contractors. After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh with an Engineering degree, Hardy became the top-producing salesman for the family's Hardy & Hayes jewelry company. At the age of 31, he left Hardy & Hayes and opened Green Hills Lumber. A few years later, Hardy pooled his resources with his two younger brothers and a friend to purchase a tract of land in the rural town of Eighty Four, Pennsylvania. There, in 1956, he opened a 'cash and carry' lumber yard focused on professional home builders in the tri-state region of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. Hardy called his new business 84 Lumber Company. Hardy also founded Nemaquin Woodlands Resort, one of North America's premier resort destinations. His business experience and desire to help Fayette County create a better business and economic base to create more jobs and a better tax base prompted him to run for a seat as a Fayette County Commissioner in 2003. Hardy was elected and began serving his term as Vice Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Fayette County in 2004.

COMPANY BRIEF 84 Lumber Company (www.84lumber.com) maintains its corporate headquarters in Eighty Four, Pennsylvania, where the original store continues to operate. The company posted sales of just over \$1.6 billion in 2012 as it continued to weather the housing downturn in the United States. The company operates 250 stores and four component-manufacturing plants, and employs 3,800 associates nationwide.

Nemaquin Woodlands Resort (www.nemaquin.com) is a lavish AAA Four Diamond and Forbes Travel Guide Four-Star resort featuring three hotels, including Falling Rock, a 42-room AAA Five Diamond boutique hotel and clubhouse. The resort also boasts Lautrec, one of 43 restaurants in the world to earn both the AAA Five Diamond and

All About People

An Interview with Joseph A. Hardy III,
Founder, 84 Lumber and Nemaquin Woodlands Resort

Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star ratings; the internationally acclaimed Woodlands Spa; the new Lady Luck Casino; 36 holes of golf on the Links Course and the Pete Dye-designed Mystic Rock; a sporting clays Shooting Academy; Equestrian Center; Jeep® off-road Driving Academy; and 15 on-site restaurants and lounges among a multitude of amenities.

Did you have a vision of what 84 Lumber could become when you started it?

We just worked hard and tried to survive and pay the bills; there was no real formula in the beginning. I didn't think about a certain number of stores – I was just trying to get by.

Did you know the business or did you have to learn it?

I had to learn it. My grandfather owned the largest jewelry store in Pittsburgh called Hardy & Hayes and that's where I was groomed in business.

My dad was crushed that I would leave it because it was a family tradition to work there. But I was the top salesman and they were saying I was too ambitious. So I knew I had to get out.

What made it work?

It was the intensity, the focus of the thing, working with employees and making them central – we always promoted from within. They knew there would be a future. Everything revolves around people. When I interview people, many want to know the benefits of the job – they don't want to work. You look to see that it's latent in their brains that they are eager to see your business grow. It's why there will always be good successful people coming on because there are so many people that really believe in having a chance to achieve at a company.

At 84, if a good person was even thinking of leaving, I'd go myself to talk it over with him even if he was 800 miles away. Everything is built on people.

It's the same at Nemaquin. You can build the castles and create the amenities, but behind it has to be that human approach.

84 is a national company with many stores. How have you maintained that family feel throughout the company?

We call our people associates – from the word go, it's all family. It's the same thing at Nemaquin – employees feel like they are Nemaquin.

It all starts at the top with how you treat a person. If I chew someone out in front of other people, he can't fire me but he can take it out on the next guest that comes in.

Everything starts at the top. I treat our associates with respect and recognize what they do well; I compliment them. This filters down to our guests and customers, and younger associates.

With regard to some of those competing players who came into the business, how did it change 84 and how did you remain relevant?

We have been in the business for a long time. We were there before Lowe's and Home Depot, but I admire both and their different business models.

Our success is the family feeling and we're tops there. As far as loyalty, it's about our people.

You have supported the entrepreneurial studies program at Washington & Jefferson College. Why did that interest you?

Anybody can be what they want to in this country today. You try to encourage people to go out on their own. Look at the high-tech entrepreneurs over the past 20 years. You have to give belief to the person that he or she can do it. In the old days, everything was corporate. You got the bright kids in there and they were on a timetable – now that's gone. There is no greater joy than to be in business for yourself. You call the shots.

Can entrepreneurship be taught or do you need to have a knack for it?

There has to be something in the brain that is there and can be expanded upon if there is real drive.

I was the oldest of three boys and my mom always told me that I was something special and was going to amount to something – she told me that every day. I think it has to be something external like that, which is an influence. The human mind can do just about anything. But the encouragement is so important.

When you're building a company like 84, as the business grows, can you reflect upon it and enjoy the successes or are you too deep in it?

I enjoy everything about it. It's thrilling to have a grand opening of a place. I want more and more of them.

Either you're growing or scaling back. There is no such thing as having a set number of stores.

When we open a new store, there is room for every individual to grow. If you have people who are intellectually with it, they feel there is opportunity. If everything is reflected on individual growth and opportunities, then you will be alright. ●