

Richard H. Evans

Denver '66

Oxford Cup Roll No. 086

April 27, 2019 | Denver, Colorado

Richard H. Evans, *Denver '66*, was initiated into the Alpha Zeta Chapter on January 20, 1963, as Roll No. 1011. Born in Ogden, Utah, he earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Denver.

Evans' journey to becoming an American sports and entertainment executive began quickly upon graduating, when he joined the Walt Disney Company as an employee of the Celebrity Sports Center in Colorado. His tenure with the company spanned seven years and included work at Disneyland in California before transferring to Orlando, Florida, for the planning, construction and pre-opening development of Walt Disney World. After its opening, Evans was responsible for operation of the east portion of the Magic Kingdom and, later, of Disney World's resort hotels and recreation facilities.

In 1975, following brief stints at Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus and Marriott's Great America Theme Parks, Evans became founder and president of Leisure General Corporation. There, he assumed the management of troubled businesses, representing investors by developing and implementing strategic plans. His reputation as a crisis manager continued to evolve throughout his career, and his work has helped save companies large and small, private and public.

Among those companies was Radio City Music Hall Productions, Inc., where Evans is credited with saving the famed Radio City Music Hall. Under his direction as chairman, president and Chief Executive Officer, the New York entertainment landmark became profitable for the first time in 30 years by changing from a first-run movie theater to the home of major concerts, television projects and theatrical productions – including the introduction of the well-known Radio City Christmas Spectacular.

Evans' next project took him a short walk across Manhattan to the Madison Square Garden Corporation. There, he served as president and CEO until 1991, overseeing all arena operations, including the NBA's New York Knicks; the NHL's New York Rangers; Miss Universe, Inc.; MSG TV/Radio Networks; and more.

In 1993, his talents were taken to Music City, U.S.A., when he was named Chief Operating Officer of Gaylord Entertainment Company in Nashville, Tennessee. Beyond spearheading a company reorganization of business units including the Grand Ole Opry, Opryland Hotel, Gaylord Communications Group (cable television's TNN and CMT) and more, Evans is credited, along with Mayor Phil Bredesen, for bringing professional sports – the NFL's Tennessee Titans and the NHL's Nashville Predators – to Nashville. He also founded and chaired the PGA BellSouth Senior Classic at Opryland.

After leaving Gaylord in 1996, Evans became president and CEO of H. Wayne Huizenga's Huizenga Sports & Entertainment Group in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, which owned the Miami Dolphins, Florida Marlins, Florida Panthers, Pro Player Stadium, the Homestead Motor Sports Complex, Sports Channel Florida and Leisure Management International. In addition to overseeing the design, construction and pre-opening planning of the \$185 Broward County Arena, the MLB's Marlins won the 1997 World Series under Evans' watch.

Since 1998, Evans has served as chairman of Evans Holdings, LLC, a real estate investment services company. He also has directorships with Life Point Health, Gridiron Capital, Tokyo Joes and Tharpe Robbins. Throughout his career, he has been involved with major organizations the likes of Genesco, Bass Pro Shops, Young Presidents' Organization, New York City Sports Commission, World Presidents Organization, Chief Executives Organization, and as a member of the University of Denver Board of Trustees.

To date, he is the only individual to have served as CEO of a franchise in all four major leagues – the NBA, NHL, NFL and MLB – and to represent each of these franchises on their leagues' respective Board of Governors. Evans currently resides in Blue Hill, Maine, and recently celebrated his 50-year "Mickey Mouse" anniversary to his Beta Sweetheart, Carla. Fittingly, they first met working together at Disneyland.