

# The News Journal

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## 75 years and still working

Guinness recognizes Pike Creek man's tenure at same company

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He'll be back in the office this week - continuing a career that no one in the world can match.

That's what the Guinness Book of World Records says about Delaware's own Tom Stoddard.

Stoddard was recognized in September as having worked longer with the same company - 75 years - than anyone else ever anywhere.

"People say, 'How did you do it?'" the impeccably dressed Stoddard said. "And I say it's easy. You start work at 16 and retire at 91."

That's what he did this year when he retired in February. He still goes into the office one day a week to consult and offer his opinion as requested. Guinness verified his 75-year work record and awarded him a certificate last month. He also will be listed in Guinness' records.

"He's everybody's best friend," said Jean Waters, executive administrative assistant at Speakman Co., which manufactures and distributes plumbing fixtures.

"He's a wealth of knowledge and he listens to people. He's concerned about all the aspects of their business and personal lives. He always has time for everybody."

Stoddard has been with Speakman since Feb. 16, 1928, when he started as a 16-year-old errand boy and timekeeper to help his family survive the Great Depression.

That meant he never actually graduated from Wilmington High School, but the son of John and Evelyn Stoddard didn't let that stop his education. He would leave work, catch a train to Philadelphia, buy a sandwich and a piece of pie for a nickel at the Horn & Hardart, then go to night school at Temple University to learn chemistry.

He became a member of the American Electroplating Society, where he got to hang around chemists, and went to business events and seminars to learn management skills.

Soon, he became Speakman's supervisor of finishes, then assistant works manager, then vice president. Then he was elected to the board of directors.

He has worked alongside four generations of the Speakman family - and there have been only five in the company's history. His boss now, Willard A. "Bill" Speakman III, has known Stoddard for more than 50 years.

"With him, you know you've got an extra ally," Speakman said.

Stoddard has the kind of qualities a true business ally possesses, Speakman said.

"One of the keys to success in any vineyard is interest in people, not just business," Speakman said. "Another key is the ability to listen. And a third key is wanting the people you work with or work through to be successful and not caring that they get the credit. At the top of the list is self-honesty - you look at yourself every morning and you know yourself. You can't fool yourself. And industriousness."

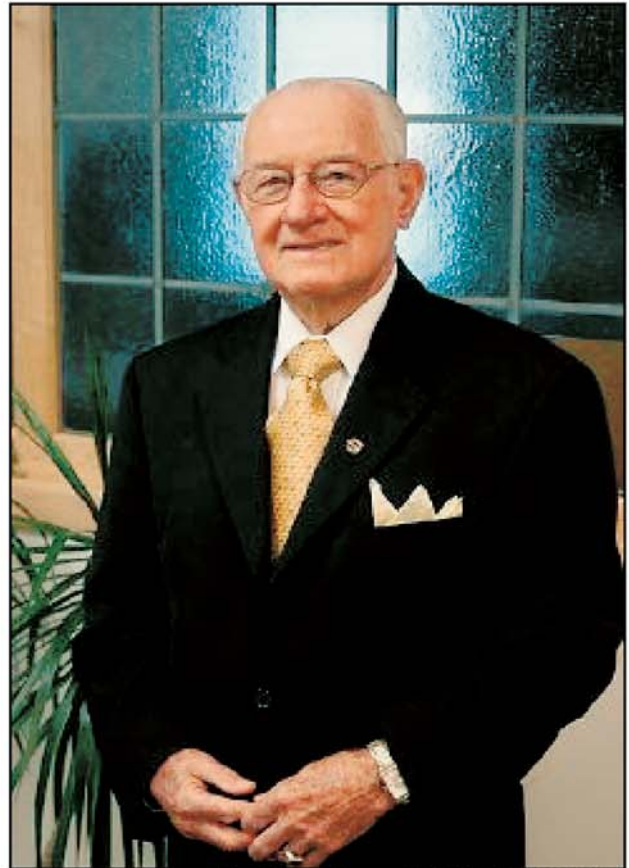
### Solid family man

Stoddard, of Pike Creek, was faithful at home, too, said his oldest son, Thomas Robert Stoddard, building a marriage that spanned 63 years until the death of his wife, Lillian.

"My mother and him loved each other to death and he watched over her when she had Alzheimer's," Stoddard's son said. "He was right there and protected her all her life."

Stoddard said his father still is his best friend, too.

"He has always been there for me, everything I ever needed," said Thomas, 66, of Middletown, who retired from Delmarva Power nine years ago. "Obviously, I learned from him - my work ethic was a commitment to work. That's what you wanted to do, to provide for your home and your wife and children. Not to quit, but always get in there."



The News Journal/FRED COMEGYS

**Tom Stoddard, 91, started in 1928 as an errand boy and timekeeper with the Speakman Co., which manufactures and distributes plumbing fixtures. He became supervisor of finishes, then assistant works manager, then vice president. Then he was elected to the board of directors. He retired in February, but still goes to the office as needed.**

"If you make a commitment, follow through."

The elder Stoddard, who has another son, Richard, four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, said he will be available to Speakman as long as the company wants his services. He is proud of the company's new facility in New Castle and absolutely committed to its success.

"I am motivated. I want to see that bottom line improve ... and anything I can do to help that happen, I want to do that."

As he has for the past 75 years.

"Where'd the time go?" he said. "I just became awful busy and liked what I was doing. I still have a desire to look forward. There's no future living in the past."

Stoddard's son never expects his dad to actually stop showing up at the Speakman Company.

"Truthfully, I don't think he could ever leave," he said. "I don't think he could ever really leave work. That's his life. He loves it in there and they're very supportive of him."

They're quite amazed by him, too.

"He's always smiling and ready to go," said administrative assistant Pat Atkins. "He's just full of energy and life."