

Introduction



Picture of William Blackie -- Caterpillar Tractor

William Blackie

CATERPILLAR TRACTOR COMPANY

1963--1977

-- Industry: Construction & Real Estate

-- Era: 1960 Blackie took Caterpillar Tractor from a small U.S. based factory in Peoria, Illinois to a multinational corporation. Blackie was instrumental in creating new markets for Caterpillar products. He invested heavily in international expansion -- setting up manufacturing facilities throughout the world.

PERSONAL

-- Born-Died: 1906--1996

-- Birthplace: Scotland

-- Race: White

-- Gender: Male

EDUCATION / MILITARY

-- Undergraduate: University of Glasgow

William Blackie, 90, Ex-Chairman of Caterpillar

May 11, 1996

William Blackie, a Scottish-born accountant who presided over Caterpillar Inc. as chairman and chief executive during booming years of growth for the manufacturer of tractors and other earth-moving equipment, died on Thursday in San Rafael, Calif., where he lived after retiring from Caterpillar. He was 90.

During Mr. Blackie's tenure as chief executive, from 1966 to 1972, Caterpillar, based in Peoria, Ill., grew from a company with \$827 million a year in sales, most of them within the United States, into a multinational powerhouse with manufacturing plants abroad. Worldwide annual revenue reached \$2.6 billion by the time of Mr. Blackie's retirement.

Mr. Blackie was born in Glasgow on May 1, 1906, and studied at the University of Glasgow. Becoming an accountant in 1930, after a five-year apprenticeship, he came to the United States that year, joining Price Waterhouse in its Chicago office, where he worked on the Caterpillar account. He joined Caterpillar in 1939 as controller.

A few months later the war in Europe began, and for the next few years Mr. Blackie played an important role in producing engines for the American military. He became a vice president of Caterpillar in 1944, an executive vice president in 1954, president of the company in 1962 and chairman in 1966.

Two years after his retirement, Mr. Blackie joined the investment banking firm of Lehman Brothers as a senior partner and director in its San Francisco office. He remained until his second retirement, in 1984.

Mr. Blackie is survived by his wife, Florence; a son, Bruce, of Hillsborough, Calif.; a sister, Jessie Hyne Hamilton of Glasgow, and three grandchildren.

After studying at University of Glasgow and completing a 5 year apprenticeship in his hometown of Glasgow, Scotland, William Blackie came to the United States. He first joined Price Waterhouse in 1930 as an accountant in the Chicago office, where he handled the Caterpillar account. Blackie later joined Caterpillar in 1939 as controller. Several months after joining the company, Mr.

Blackie played an important role in producing engines for the American military as the war in Europe began. His career progressed at Caterpillar, becoming vice president of Caterpillar in 1944, an executive vice president in 1954, president of the company in 1962, and chairman in 1966.

Retiring from Caterpillar in 1972, Blackie had been the driving force in transforming Caterpillar from a small U.S. based factory in Peoria to a multinational corporation. He invested heavily in international expansion, setting up manufacturing facilities throughout the world. During his time as president and chairman, Caterpillar sales rose from \$827 million to more than \$2.6 billion.

Two years after retiring from Caterpillar, Blackie joined Lehman Brothers Inc., an investment banking firm as a senior partner and director in its San Francisco office where he remained until his second retirement in 1984.

5 part videos of William Blackie

[Video Part 1 Link](#)

Video link to Part 1 - Legends - William Blackie Caterpillar

[Video Part 2 Link](#)

Video link to Part 2 - Legends - William Blackie Caterpillar

[Video Part 3 Link](#)

Video link to Part 3 - Legends - William Blackie Caterpillar

[Video Part 4 Link](#)

Video link to Part 4 - Legends - William Blackie Caterpillar

[Video Part 5 Link](#)

Video link to Part 5 - Legends - William Blackie Caterpillar



MEET THE STRATEGIST - BILL BLACKIE

William ❖Bill❖ Blackie was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1906. After studying accounting, business law and economics, he spent five years as a chartered accountant's apprentice before becoming an accountant himself in 1930. In that same year he came to the United States and was employed by an accounting firm of national prominence before joining Caterpillar in 1939 as controller. He was elected a vice president in 1944, an executive vice president in 1954, a director in 1958, and president in 1962. He became our fifth chairman of the board in 1966.

One of Blackie❖s most significant legacies was the transformation of Caterpillar into a truly multinational corporation. Hear in his own words how prior to World War II, Caterpillar equipment was exported from Peoria, Illinois, to our customers across the globe. It was Blackie❖s idea that Caterpillar should now ❖❖sell, manufacture, and employ in several different countries.❖ But such a monumental shift in operations didn❖t occur simply for its own sake.

Blackie❖s reasoning for this evolution was highly strategic. He said, ❖Caterpillar didn❖t do it for the purpose of becoming multinational. It did it to first secure markets which it already held but to be in position to defend

against competition and expand those markets which would be difficult to do it from the United States. Being a multinational company provided Caterpillar with the ability to globally compete.◆ By 1970, sales outside of the U.S. were greater than those inside the U.S. for the first time in company history.

In addition to being a dedicated leader and a keen strategist, Blackie was also a mentor to employees and a true citizen of the world. He often talked about what it meant to be a Caterpillar employee, not just in the U.S. but across the globe, once saying that, no matter where we are, ◆ We want people who, as a natural code of personal conduct, like to pursue excellence in all they do. The success of Caterpillar is based on the work and ability of its people. That is what we call Caterpillar People.◆