



HERBERT V. KOHLER

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The Hospitality Industry Network

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Herbert V. Kohler, Jr. is Chairman of the Board and CEO of the Kohler Co., headquartered in Kohler, Wisconsin. The company focuses on living environments with a mission “to improve the level of gracious living for all persons touched by its products and services” and it has become a world leader in the manufacture of kitchen and bath products, engines and power systems, premier furniture under the brand names of Baker and McGuire, and host to international host to award-winning hospitality and world-class golf destinations.

In 1981 Mr. Kohler converted a dormitory originally built for immigrants across the street from an iron foundry into a five-diamond resort hotel which in turn led to a fourth business group and two of the world’s highest rated golf resort destinations in Kohler, Wisconsin and St. Andrews Scotland. The

company has hosted the 1998 U.S. Women’s Open, the 2004 and 2010 PGA Championships at Whistling Straits, and at its Old Course Hotel the 2005 British Open and the 2007 U.S. Senior Open. It has been awarded the 2012 U.S. Women’s Open; the 2015 PGA Championship; and the 2020 Ryder Cup.

Mr. Kohler was born in 1939, the oldest of three children of Herbert Sr. and Ruth DeYoung Kohler. His father was elected “Man of the Year” by the National Association of Manufacturers in 1958. His mother was an historian and women’s editor of The Chicago Tribune. Young Kohler grew up in the Village of Kohler. After his mother passed away at age 14, he graduated from the Choate School in Wallingford, Connecticut in 1957. During a period of rebellion in the late 50’s and early 60’s he was nearly convinced that the theater and acting would be the focus of his life. About to get married, he was struck by the magnitude of the responsibility he was about to accept, then graduated from Yale University in 1965 with a Bachelor of Science degree in industrial administration.

Having worked as a laborer or technician in every division of the Company as a teen and in his early twenties, he knew the potential of the place. He could not accept however the planned succession his father anticipated. One day well after Yale, his father called and presented the case for the Company. After initial refusal young Kohler called back three days later and accepted on the resolute condition that his father would let him suffer the consequence of any mistakes, that his father would never protect or promote.

Young Mr. Kohler then set his course to make “The Bold Look of Kohler” more than just a logo. Starting as a R&D technician in 1965, he became a Director of the corporation in March 1967. After President Kuplic and his father Chairman Kohler both died in July 1968, he became vice president of operations three weeks later, then executive vice president in January 1971. He was elected chairman of the board and CEO in June 1972, and president of the company in April 1974, marking a third generation of Kohler family leadership. In the time since, he has received more than 200 design and utility patents. Over the last 35 years this privately held company has attained an average compound growth in book value of 11.4% per year compared to 7.3% for the S&P 500.

The National Kitchen and Bath Hall of Fame inducted Mr. Kohler in its founding year of 1989, followed by the National Housing Hall of Fame in 1993. In 2002, he was named National Entrepreneur of the Year in Manufacturing. In April of 2006 he was inducted into the Junior Achievement U.S. Business Hall of Fame.

Other honors include the Morgan Horse Hall of Fame in 1996, the Ellis Island Medal of Honor for “exemplifying American ideals and preserving an Austrian heritage” in 1997, and Breeder of the Year by the United States Equestrian Federation in 2005. He has received honorary doctorates from Lakeland College and Lawrence University.

In addition to his executive responsibilities with Kohler Co., Mr. Kohler chairs the Board of Trustees of his prep school alma mater Choate Rosemary Hall and recently launched a \$200 million capital campaign. He has been a director of the National Association of Manufacturers since 1974 and a Trustee of Outward Bound USA since 1990. He created the Kohler Trust for the Arts & Education and the Kohler Trust for Preservation.

Learning from the past, Mr. Kohler had no vision or plan for any of his three children in the Company. He encouraged them to play to their strengths. Today all three are engaged in the businesses of the Company. Laura is Senior Vice President of Human Resources with responsibility for 30,000 associates, having graduated from Duke and Catholic University with a Masters in Fine Arts and having founded her own theater company. Rachel is President of the Interiors Group, having graduated from Princeton and Chicago with an MBA and having worked for five years with First Boston and Booz Allen. David is President and Chief Operating Officer of the Company responsible for the Kitchen and Bath Group, Global Power Group, Interiors Group and Technical Services, having graduated from Duke and Kellogg at Northwestern with an MBA and having worked at Dayton Hudson as a merchandise manager in fine china. All three are members of the Board of Directors of Kohler Co. along with four independent outside Directors.

His wife, Natalie Black, having graduated from Stanford University and Marquette Law, is General Counsel, Senior Vice President of Communications and Corporate Secretary, and a Director of Kohler Co. and Johnson Controls.

Today, more than half of the Company’s 30,000 associates live and work beyond the borders of the United States, yet the Company continues to grow as one of the oldest and largest privately held companies in the United States.