



# NEWS RELEASE



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## Passing of a Legend

(New Gretna, N.J., Aug. 15, 2025) – William “Bill” J. Healey of Cape May and Mays Landing, N.J., passed away peacefully surrounded by his loving family on Aug. 14, 2025, at Shore Medical Center in Somers Point, N.J., from long-term complications of a stroke. He was 97.

The former president of the Viking Yacht Company in New Gretna, N.J., which he founded with his late brother Robert T. Healey Sr. on April 1, 1964, Healey built a boat manufacturing empire in the recreational marine industry. He relentlessly encouraged and supported legions of dedicated shipwrights who designed and manufactured luxury yachts.

Healey was intense and feisty, but beneath that drive was a soft heart and a deep bond with others. He valued his team with unbounded enthusiasm and commitment, often reminding them that they did not work *for* Bill Healey but that they worked *with* Bill Healey.

A source of never-ending inspiration to build a better boat every day, Healey demonstrated his love for his boatbuilders by standing at the door every evening to thank and wish them a good night as they left the factory. He not only knew the names of hundreds of Viking’s carpenters, electricians, mechanics, designers, metal craftsmen, fiberglass workers and outfitters, but often of their family members as well. He cared for his Viking family, creating a factory health department that provided employees and their families free on-site medical care in addition to the company’s traditional health benefits.

One of four brothers, he was born to Patrick J. Healey Sr. and Loretta M. Healey on Nov. 6, 1927, in Atlantic City, N.J. They were a tightly knit family; Healey attended Camden Catholic High School and entered the U.S. Marine Corps, serving during the final years of World War II. After his honorable discharge from the armed forces, he earned a B.S. degree in political science from St. Joseph’s College in Philadelphia in 1951.

Healey worked for his father at P.J. Healey Structural Steel in Atco, N.J., before turning his attention to the Jersey Shore. When Peterson-Viking, a local wooden boatbuilder failed, it marked the beginning of Viking Yachts — and a career that would make it the world’s largest builder of luxury fiberglass sportfishing and cruising yachts.

Healey was swift to shift from wood to fiberglass and launched a Viking 40 Convertible in 1972. Viking Yachts was often considered an underdog in marine manufacturing that was dominated by larger corporations. With a family-owned and operated company, Healey thrived on competition and would never be satisfied living in anyone's shadow. He set out with plans to innovate and offer clients value for what they would invest in a Viking yacht. Healey's Viking Yacht Company grew into an 880,000-square-foot facility with multiple production lines capable of producing 100 yachts each year. Vertically integrated, nearly 90 percent of what goes into a Viking yacht is designed and manufactured in-house to focus on quality control and customer satisfaction. Now in its 61st year, Viking has manufacturing locations in New Gretna and Egg Harbor City, N.J., and multiple service and sales facilities in Palm Beach County, Fla.

But all this almost never happened. Viking was dead in the water in 1991 after a federal 10 percent luxury tax on boats priced above \$100,000 crushed sales. With production at a standstill, Viking lost 1,500 workers. When the tax was repealed in 1993, Viking came back stronger than ever and today is recognized around the world for its yachts of quality and performance.

Healey was instrumental in modernizing the yacht-building business. He was ahead of his time, designing a tri-generation facility in the plant to provide power for its electrical, air-conditioning and heating needs. He built and installed a wastewater treatment plant, invested in a \$1 million five-axis CNC (computer numerical control) router to design and shape parts and components for the factory and the boats, and added solar panels on the roofs of several buildings for additional clean power.

Among his various major honors, Healey enjoyed receiving the Ernst & Young N.J. Manufacturing Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 1998. He was inducted into the National Marine Manufacturers Association Hall of Fame in 2003 and the following year earned the Press of Atlantic City's Bailey Award for community contributions. In 2024, he was inducted into the Marine Trades Association of N.J. Hall of Fame.

Although Healey retired in October 2013, turning the throttles over to his son Patrick, he continued a daily presence at the New Gretna facility to the delight of old and new customers he would meet at the factory.

Healey is survived by his son, Patrick J. Healey, and daughter-in-law, Leanne A. Healey, of Ocean City, N.J.; their children, Sean P. Healey, of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.; Justin L. Healey of Somers Point, N.J.; Kaitlyn B. Healey, also of Ocean City; and his daughter Katherine A. Healey, of Palm Beach Shores, Fla., and her children, Allie K. Parr and husband Brandon Parr of Virginia Beach, Va.; Erin K. MacCausland of Philadelphia; and Alexander J. MacCausland, of Philadelphia. He was preceded in death by his wife of 62 years, Mary "Sissy" Frances Healey; his daughter, Mary "Missy" Frances Hartdorn and her husband, Gary R. Hartdorn; and brothers Robert T. Healey, Patrick J. Healey, "Uncle Jerry," and Edward R. Healey.

Arrangements will be announced at a later date.

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