



## *Harbanse Singh "Herb" Doman*

1932-2007

Starting with nothing more than a strong spirit and a determination to succeed, Harbanse Singh "Herb" Doman founded Doman Industries Limited and built it into one of Canada's premier forest products companies. Herb Doman attributed his success to remembering both his origins and his dreams, and dedicating himself to preventing any waste—of time, personnel, or raw materials—at his operations.

Herb was born on April 9, 1932, in Duncan on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. On March 3, 1944, tragedy struck the Doman family. Herb's father passed away, and Herb was forced to leave school at the age of 12 and go to work. After working for hire for several years, but still a young man, Herb went into business for himself as sole proprietor of the company that became Doman Industries. He began business trucking lumber and copper ore, selling building supplies to contractors, and supplying wood fuel to consumer and commercial markets. He incorporated his company in 1955.

As the years went by, a business that began with a single truck eventually grew to number more than 200 pieces of heavy duty hauling and materials handling equipment. This division included operations in British Columbia, Alberta, the Yukon, and eleven states in the western United States. Herb eventually sold this arm of the business at the end of 1990 to concentrate more fully on forest products and woodland operations.

From the late 1950s and into the 1960s, Herb expanded his business well beyond hauling. He established a chain of building supply stores, which were replaced in 1984 with a lumber wholesaling business. In 1964, the year that Doman Industries went public, Herb ventured into sawmilling and logging, operations that remain at the heart of Doman Industries.

On Vancouver Island, Herb oversaw construction of four sawmills, which came into operation between 1967 and 1980. He also acquired interests in other operations, eventually taking on a majority interest in Western Forest Products Limited in 1989 and acquiring the remainder of the company in 1992. This acquisition ultimately added two pulp mills, five sawmills, and extensive logging operations to the company.

In the early 1980s, a worldwide economic crisis took hold, which had an enormous impact on the wood products industry. Herb had to make many quick adjustments, including scaling back operations, but he never laid off a single worker. Even in the face of difficult times, Herb took over the Western Forest Products sawmill in New

Westminster, British Columbia, and made it a profitable operation. Herb translated adversity into opportunity and made his company stronger and more efficient.

Throughout his career, Herb also looked for ways to make timber use as efficient as possible. Recognizing that he could enhance his company's capabilities by converting raw and wood waste materials, Herb supervised Doman Industries' movement into expanded wood product manufacturing. In 1989, a value-added log merchandising plant at Duke Point, Nanaimo, began production.

This new plant was the first of its kind in Canada. At the time of its construction, Herb proudly noted that it was "designed to fully utilize low grade material, the raw material too often left on the forest floor in the past. When it takes 50 years to grow product, we shouldn't waste one bit." In 1994, Herb added a lumber re-manufacturing plant at Chemainus on Vancouver Island to Doman Industries' operations.

In December 1997, after more than 40 years in the wood products and lumber business, Herb led his company into one of its boldest ventures. The company acquired Crown operations for \$143.8 million, which greatly expanded the capabilities and potential of the company. The purchase enabled greater economies of scale, better operational efficiency, and increased access to raw materials.

With this acquisition, Herb now headed one of Canada's foremost forest products companies and made Doman Industries the second largest coastal woodland operator in British Columbia. By the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the company employed some 5,000 people and boasted customers in 30 countries worldwide. The company's activities included timber harvesting, reforestation, sawmilling logs into lumber and wood chips, value-added re-manufacturing, and the production of dissolving sulphite pulp and NBSK pulp.

In January 2001, Herb's health took a turn for the worse that prevented him from overseeing the day-to-day operations of the company. In February 2001, Rick Doman, Herb's son, succeeded his father as Doman Industries President and Chief Executive Officer.

Though the company grew enormously under Herb's leadership, he never forgot his origins or the hard work of the people employed in his mills and plants. Virtually every Saturday of his working life, Herb conducted a "walkabout" through one of his operations. Herb explained the importance of this practice: "I just talk to whoever's around. I think it's important that they know who they work for—and maybe more important that they know I work for them. I level with them. They level with me. I learn something and they learn something—and that's the way it should be."