

## **Jack East, Sr.**

Jack East Sr. was born in 1899 in Texarkana to E.C. East. He graduated with a degree in Engineering and worked for a lumber company, where he traveled the entire United States, Canada and Mexico selling specialty hard wood lumber in such quantities that to his employers he seemed the prototype go-getter. Soldier of fortune though he seemed, Jack East yearned for permanence. In 1924 he married Frances Sue Edwards of Lonoke and moved to Little Rock. East went into the surety bond business as an agent in 1924 and quickly became known as "the bond man". East and his agency, Rebsamen and East Insurance, wrote most of the highway construction bonds in Arkansas from the 1940s through most of the 1960s. In 1968 East, Knight Cashion and Jack East Jr. left Rebsamen and East to form their own agency, East, Cashion and East.

Bob McCord noted in an article published shortly after East's death: "East liked to tell stories in spicy language that endeared him to the people he liked best-men who had more calluses than college degrees. Jack East Sr.'s specialty was executing bonds for contractors and, until his retirement a few years ago, he wrote most of the bonds for the major construction projects in Arkansas." Over 30 years time, East and the late Raymond Rebsamen built the largest general insurance agency and bonding company in the Southwest.

In late 1937, the following was published regarding Jack East: "... certain individuals stand out for various reasons and none more cameo like than Jack East of Little Rock, AR, active head of the exceedingly up and coming agency Rebsamen & East. Jack East comes close to being a human dynamo ... East's vitality is boundless, his enthusiasm infectious and irresistible, his mind a reservoir of precise information, his confidence in himself complete and his personality engaging almost to the point of hypnosis."

Jack East Sr.'s zest for life developed early. Other than his work, East had two consuming interests: athletics and the Little Rock municipal airport.

His love of sports developed when he was a boy in his hometown of Texarkana and really blossomed at the university where he was a baseball and football star. A staunch supporter of the Arkansas Travelers, East was a member of a small band of Little Rock businessmen who managed to keep professional baseball here. But East's real love was football. Along with a couple of other fellows, East was the originator of the Wild Hog Club, that exclusive association of football fanatics that has meant so much in the development of big time football in Arkansas.

East's greatest contribution to the city and state, however is the terminal at Adams Field. Without his persistence, Little Rock would not have its terminal, one that now would be a credit to any city in the nation. When he retired in 1975 after serving more than 20 years as an airport commissioner, a conference room in the new building was named in his honor.

Jack East, Sr. is an unforgettable character. He was a rarity among successful businessmen.