



Founder of J.Crew and Vail regular Arthur Cinader, 90, dies

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Arthur Cinader, founder of the J.Crew brand, has died at the age of 90. Through catalogs, stores and then the internet, J.Crew revolutionized the way Americans dressed and was a pioneer of multichannel retailing.

Mr. Cinader, who had lived in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with his wife, Johanna, for the last 20 years of his life, was an influential figure in fashion, building on his father's catalog business to bring quality clothing to a nationwide, and later an international, marketplace. His vision of how middle-class Americans aspired to the "preppy" look at affordable prices made J.Crew into a brand that became a household name synonymous with sporty personal style.

Born in 1927 in New York to Mitchell and Sarah Cinader, Arthur Cinader attended the Bronx High School of Science in 1940. However, needing a change in climate for health reasons, he moved west and finished high school in Arizona, entering the University of Arizona when he was 17.

He went on to attend Yale Medical School but left early to join his father at Popular Merchandise Co. in 1950. This Rye, New York catalog business had been founded by Mitchell Cinader with important trust and backing from his cousin Saul Charles in 1947. The younger Cinader took over from his father soon after and developed the financial side of the business, creating a club buying plan through which customers obtained and used credit in new ways. Popular Merchandise went on to buy First National Bank of Albuquerque in 1969, with Arthur as the CEO and chairman, then running both companies.

But he made his true mark when he set up J.Crew seven years later in 1983. The company brought together the loves of his life: family, as seen throughout the years in the catalog photography, skiing and the outdoors, the unstudied elegance of Ivy League life, his reverence for the English language and his command of the catalog business.

The iconic sport of crew provided the basis for the brand name, and the first catalog was photographed at the Weld Boat House at Harvard University. The sophisticated copy that was a hallmark of the J.Crew and Clifford Wills catalogs was inspired by Cinader's love of Shakespeare, Samuel Johnson and Winston Churchill.

America quickly came on board with J.Crew, and the brand became a part of the zeitgeist of that era.

Mr. Cinader married Johanna van Riel, from The Hague, Netherlands, in 1958. The couple loved the outdoors — their honeymoon featured fox hunting in Ireland. They went on to cherish vacations with their five children skiing in Vail, where Mr. Cinader was renowned for his habit of singing on the chairlift.

In the early 1970s, he became a board member of the Santa Fe Opera and the technology firm Lectrosonics. In the 1980s, he served on the Vestry of Church of the Epiphany in New York. After retirement, he was a member of the congregation at St. Thomas on Fifth Avenue and The Church of the Holy Faith in Santa Fe.

His intellectual life was rich. He was an early member of the CATO Institute, as well as the Institute of Religion and Public Life and the American Enterprise Institute.

In 1997, he retired and he and his wife moved to New Mexico. Arthur is survived by his wife, their five children and 13 grandchildren.

A funeral service will be held on Saturday, Nov. 4, at 3 p.m. at The Church of the Holy Faith, 311 East Palace Ave., Santa Fe, New Mexico.

In gratitude toward the soldiers of World War II, the family requests that donations be made in Arthur Cinader's name to the Bosque Convention and Retreat Center Chapel at secure-q.net/donations/bosquecenter/11088.