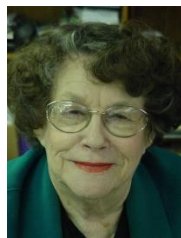


**EDNA
MILLER
HENNESSEE
1919-2011**



**COSMETIC
SPECIALTY
LABS
FOUNDER**

Edna Hennessee spent more than sixty years in the cosmetics business pioneering home beauty products. She was the founder of the multimillion-dollar Cosmetic Specialty Labs in Lawton, which also included the Hennessee Family Center and Dream Valley Farm.

Edna Miller was born in 1919 in Ryan and raised on a cattle ranch during the Great Depression. She graduated from Union High School in 1936 as valedictorian. In 1939, she married Lloyd Roy Hennessee and moved to Lawton.

During World War II, times were tough. After buying a washing machine in 1944, she took in laundry from neighbors each evening. She soon had \$300 in savings and wanted to go into business for herself. She had always been interested in the cosmetics business and became familiar with Merle Norman Cosmetic Products. However, a franchise cost \$1,000.

She was able to talk Merle Norman's son into selling her a franchise for \$300 but was told that she would have to attend training in California and pay the balance later. She bought a one-way bus ticket to Los Angeles for \$15. Once in Los Angeles, she stayed in a local YMCA, which was all her budget would allow.

While in training, Edna received her first order of products. She literally went out on the streets and sold her first orders to strangers. She was able to repay her full franchise fee of \$1,000 and order more products. When her training was completed in 1944, she boarded a bus and headed back to Lawton.

Her daughter was born in 1947 and her son in 1948. Two years later, she expanded her business by opening a beauty salon and skin care facility known as Hennessee Family Center, which later became the largest salon in the Lawton area. It was her corporation that helped start the aloe vera industry.

After many years of experience using various product lines, she eventually decided that she wanted a better product than what was available on the market. She wrote to various chemical companies and taught herself chemistry and mixing. A little kitchen in Hennessee Family Center served as her "lab" and the shop her testing salon.

In 1973, against all odds and the advice of friends, she went into serious debt and opened Cosmetic Specialty Labs, a family-owned and operated company that brought aloe vera-based cosmetics to the public, serving all fifty states and some foreign countries. Her son Odus served as president, becoming an expert in aloe vera. He was affectionately called "The Aloe Vera Man". In 1982 she established Dream Valley Farm near Cache. The farm is a greenhouse where more than 30,000 aloe vera plants are grown. Aloe is used for a health drink and cosmetics manufactured at the laboratory.

Hennessee received numerous awards and honors for her many years of business. She received Oklahoma's Small Business Administration Award (1992) and was the first woman inducted into the Oklahoma Commerce and Industry Hall of Fame (1993). A stretch of State Highway 58 near her Medicine Park home, where she lived for the last thirty years of her life, was dedicated in her honor.

Edna Hennessee died in March 2011 at age 92 in Lawton. She paved the way for women in the business world with her products, still being sold across the United States and around the world.