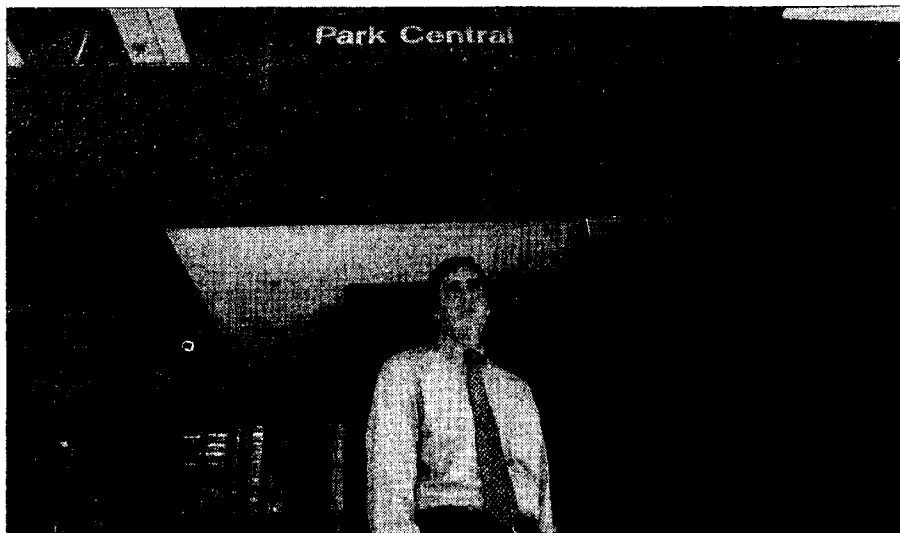


## COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE



KATHLEEN LAVINE/DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Doug Knaus of Means Knaus, which manages and leases the Park Central building in downtown Denver, will keep the company's name intact.

## Means Knaus foundation still solid after co-founder's death

BY JENNIFER DAWSON  
HOUSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

Real estate developer Doug Knaus has found himself in a state of rebuilding after his business partner died suddenly last January.

Steven Means passed away while scuba diving in the British Virgin Islands during a vacation he took with his wife to celebrate his 60th birthday. The adventurous businessman, a jet pilot and experienced scuba diver, is survived by his wife and five children.

The tragedy ended a 24-year working relationship between the two developers, the last seven of which were spent running Means Knaus Partners LP. Knaus worked in Houston while his longtime friend acted as CEO in the firm's Dallas office.

"It's been extremely difficult, from a personal standpoint, as well as a business standpoint," says Knaus.

The 65-person firm had to return to work soon after the shocking event because the company was in the process of acquiring an office building in Houston at the time.

Means Knaus had been selected as the winning bidder to acquire the 2000 West Loop South building, which it was buying on behalf of a group of tenant-in-common investors led by U.S. Advisor LLC. The buyer and the seller, CMD Realty Investors LP, were in the middle of negotiating the contract in January when they got the news.

"It was an incredible unfortunate string of events," says Robert Williamson of Holiday Fenoglio Fowler LP, who represented the seller. "Fortunately we had a compassionate seller and a willing buyer. Everything froze for about two weeks."

The two sides eventually moved ahead, and the 356,750-square-foot property changed hands in April for a little more than \$49 million.

"They were incredibly professional through this whole process, which had to be difficult for them," says Williamson, whose colleague Jeff Hollinden also worked on the deal. "They did exactly what they said they were going to do. Nothing fell through the cracks on their side."

Indeed, Scott Martin, managing director in Houston for Granite Properties, says Knaus has held up well through this tough time.

"When you lose somebody like Steve Means, not only is it a tragedy but it's a hard blow to an organization," says Martin, who has worked with Knaus for many years.

Means Knaus had a succession plan in place in the event that one of the owners in the 50-50 partnership died. The men had agreed that the surviving partner would purchase the other's interest to gain full ownership of the company.

While Knaus is left as sole owner, he has decided to retain the Means Knaus name for now.

"There is tremendous goodwill in the name of the company," Knaus says.

Moving forward, Knaus has hired seasoned veteran Peyton Collins as managing director of Texas operations. Collins most recently was with McCord Development Inc./Navisys Group. Prior to that he had worked with Knaus at the Paragon Group, which was acquired by Insignia Financial Group.

Collins will spend much of his time in Houston overseeing the remaining development of about 20 acres in Oak Park at Westchase and finding a build-to-suit prospect for a five-acre tract in the Enclave development in west Houston.

In Houston, Collins joins long-time Means Knaus executives Bill Brownfield, who's responsible for acquisitions, and Cynthia Rogers, who has overseen more than \$70 million in construction as executive vice president of construction.

Jim Johnson, the firm's chief operating officer, is now in charge of the Dallas office.

Company founders Means and Knaus first met in 1981 at Paragon where they worked together until 1996. Means left that year to form Means Interests, the predecessor company to Means Knaus Partners, which was formed in 1998.

Houston-based Means Knaus has grown into a commercial real estate investment and service firm that conducts development, acquisition, leasing and management throughout the Southwest United States. The firm's portfolio includes 4.5 million square feet of properties which it either owns or manages for other large investors.

The firm's primary markets have been Houston, Dallas and Denver, but Knaus is now looking at expanding into Arizona and California. ■