

# Terry Stiles

(Chairman/CEO, Stiles, Fort Lauderdale; age 69)

► **I lost 80 pounds.** I'm fighting cancer. I needed to lose 80 pounds. Went skiing. It was a lot easier to get up after you fell. I went scuba diving last week. It was a lot easier to get out of the boat.

► **I have two older daughters.** They both played soccer and volleyball, so I went to all those games. Kenny played football and wrestled and played on the golf team. I'm just telling you. Cherish it.

► **I've had three life-threatening events,** and once you have one of those — probably four, I'm going to throw my dad in there because he died when he was 55 — you go, you know what? There's more to life than just working all the time. I decided I'm going to work hard and I'm going to play hard. That's kind of the theory we have here at the company, too. If you have a kid playing, it's not a problem for you to go see them.

► **When my dad died in '71,** I was 23. We had two carpenters and a laborer. We'd stucco, lay block, do whatever we could do.

► **'91 was a bloodbath.** I don't tell this to many people, but I was probably \$100 million underwater. Talk about not sleeping at night. I went to a NAIOP conference and the guy goes, 'don't walk away from your assets. Go to the bank, be honest with them, tell them you're the best person to work it out. Open your books up to them. Don't take a damn nickel out of it and ask for time and a reduction in your rate, and they'll work with you.' That's what I did. We

**My dad made me work from the time I was 13. I mean I tied steel, dug ditches, laid block. I got to learn all that stuff. So I built a house when I was 19.**

worked out of every one of them.

► **My dad said this to me:** You've got two things to protect, your credit and your name. Back in '91 when I was underwater, my attorney said you've got to go bankrupt. I said my dad would probably dig himself out of the grave and beat me with the shovel if I did that.

► **My son is going to be CEO** in a year. Our whole goal is to have this be a 100-year company. So the transition is working good. We did this all before I was diagnosed with cancer.

► **I want to stay active** on the creative side of it. I want to stay active in our key clients. I want to stay active in the nature of the culture of the company, like walking around talking to people. I like going out on the job sites. All the administrative stuff, all the salary reviews, all of the compensation plans, the health insurance part — I hate that stuff. I love doing the deals.

► **We became a real 24-hour city.** This is one of the few occupations that when you're done, at the end of the day you can look back, I had something to do with that.

► **I would look back** and look at all the tenants and all the clients I have, and it's because of relationships. Not that you join a charity or something to get business but you get to know the community. I think you've got to give back. I'm not saying that as a cliché. I really do. Last Saturday, we did a Habitat build. I was out there with them setting trusses. The 10 people who

were there bonded.

► **A lot of people say you're silly,** but you're sitting around, they go, 'where did you go to college? Where did you graduate?' Harvard. Duke. They get to me, I go, 'I didn't.' It's a big flat spot in my life.

► **We went to Africa two years ago.** We were talking about going on a river cruise up the Danube. I go, 'I don't want to do that. I don't want to look at a museum.' I want to go do something, go down the Colorado River or something like that.

► **We lived in a trailer park** in Wilton Manors. We didn't have a bathroom. We had to walk to a community bathroom. My dad built this house in Sleepy River Acres. It's got all these old oak trees. They had just filmed the last *Tarzan* movie. And when they were done, they just released the monkeys. They'd have cocktail parties, and these silly monkeys would come down and steal the hors d'oeuvres.

► **You never said no to my dad.** My dad was a tough guy. I was president of the student council. I was like the perfect little kid. Never drank in high school, but he and I just butted heads. He was always working, though.


► **There are developers** who started after me and are worth way more than I am. But I know who they are, and I know the reputation they have with their employees and maybe even their clients and maybe even their partners. I may not have as much money in the bank, but I feel good about coming to work. 



photo: Eileen Escarda