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The Associated Press

DEARBORN, Mich. (AP) — Former Ford Motor Co. CEO Harold "Red" Poling has died. He was 86.

The long-time auto executive died Saturday in Pacific Grove, California, according to Ford.

Bill Ford, the automaker's executive chairman, called Poling an "extraordinary leader" who had a "profound impact" on both Ford and those he worked with.

"With a list of accomplishments that span 43 years, including leading the company through a remarkable turnaround during the 1980s and 1990s, Red was respected by all for his leadership, his passion for being the low-cost producer and his genuine affinity for people," Bill Ford said in a company statement.

Poling led Ford, based in Dearborn, Michigan, as chairman and chief executive less than four years, from 1990 until his retirement at the end of 1993.

Born in the Detroit suburb of Troy, Michigan, Poling grew up in Fairfax, Virginia, and served in the Navy before earning his bachelor's degree at Monmouth College in Illinois and then his MBA at Indiana University.

Poling interned at Ford while at Indiana. After receiving his degree, he returned to the automaker as a cost analyst in its steel division's controller's office.

Poling worked his way up through the ranks to lead Ford's European operations in the 1970s and became a member of the automaker's board in 1979. He went on to serve as its chief operating officer and vice chairman in the 1980s, before being named CEO in March 1990.

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