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Gosman: Can this shy New Hampshire man who grew up poor be respected and revered?

GLOBE PHOTO / ANTHONY D'AGOSTINI

VITAL STATS

ABRAHAM GOSMAN

BIRTH DATE
Dec. 8, 1928

PLACE OF BIRTH
Boston

EDUCATION
University of New Hampshire; graduated cum laude with B.A. in Economics, 1949

LAST ART ACQUISITION
Jim Dine painting

FAVORITE SPECTATOR SPORTS
Baseball, polo, basketball, football

FAVORITE PARTICIPATION SPORT
Golf and yachting

WHY HE LIVES IN WEST PALM BEACH
"It's a much more casual place. Did you ever hear a horn honk in West Palm Beach?"

FAVORITE BOSTON RESTAURANT
Grill 23

LAST VACATION
England and France

FAVORITE SAYING ABOUT HEALTHCARE REFORM
"Patients will be released"

Abe Gosman's legacy

By Kimberly Blanton
GLOBE STAFF

Abraham D. Gosman, in impeccable tuxedo and red silk bow tie, stepped to the podium — and, in minutes, marred an otherwise flawless dinner held to honor his vast accomplishments in the health care field.

Flanked on the dais by the first black senator in modern times, Edward Brooke of Massachusetts, the former governor of New York, Hugh Carey, and others on the board of Meditrust, the health care finance company that Gosman founded, he noted the racial and ethnic diversity of the board.

"Italians, Jews, coloreds" are

Having made his millions, entrepreneur now wants to be remembered fondly. But his tough guy image won't help.

The offhand remarks, intended as a joke, caused throats to clear and evening wear to rustle at the elegant February dinner at the Ritz Carlton Hotel.

Interpreted by friends as revealing Gosman's naivete rather than racism or sexism (some said he was joking about Zoe Baird's failed nomination for US attorney general), the

ner, said later. "What you have to remember about Abe is, he's a guy who's worked his way up. He's not smooth."

But the incident raised, once again, a question that fascinates people who know Boston's wealthiest health care entrepreneur: Can this short, shy man from New Hampshire who grew up poor be what he wants to be — respected and revered?

Gosman, when asked whether he realized he may have offended some, says he did not. "I certainly would apologize to you or anybody else" for the remark, he says, "and I won't be saying it again. It's not characteristic of me."

The only child of Russian Jewish immigrants, Gosman is gaining a higher profile after years of laboring in the unglamorous world of nursing homes, amassing a fortune estimated at upward of \$200 million along the way. He belongs with the plutocrats

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