



Hour photo/ERIK TRAUTMANN

Rob Perkin, son of the late Richard Perkin, is presented with photographs of his father at a Perkin-Elmer employee reunion held at the site of the former headquarters at 761 Main Ave. on Wednesday. Vice President of corporate affairs Julianne Grace, left, presents the photographs to Perkin, while Perkin's niece, Kristina Perkin is at right.

## Back to work at Perkin-Elmer

Former Perkin-Elmer employees visit site of old headquarters one last time

By **CHRIS BOSAK**  
Hour Staff Writer

**NORWALK** — There were plenty of handshakes, hugs and stories to go around.

More than 100 former employees of Perkin-Elmer gathered at the building that

served as the company's headquarters for more than 50 years on Wednesday to take a final tour before a Greenwich developer renovates the property into offices and housing. The building — located at 761 Main Ave. — will be known as i.Park Norwalk.

"I have great memories from here, my gosh," said Wilton's Mary Riccio, who worked for the company for 31 years as a purchasing agent. "It's nice to see the place and

people again."

Riccio visited the site with her husband, Robert Riccio, who worked for the company for more than 40 years. Robert Riccio recalled the company's co-founder, Richard Perkin.

"Mr. Perkin used to know everyone by first name," he said. "I've never seen such respect for people and property."

Rob Perkin, a son of Richard Perkin, was one of the guests at the reunion on

Wednesday.

"It's a tremendous honor to see so many employees come back," Perkin said. "It's certainly a great day for this."

Rob Perkin also wrote a note that was handed out to visitors as they arrived.

"On behalf of my mother and father, I would like to extend warmest regards to all those who worked so hard to build Perkin-Elmer," Perkin

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wrote. "I know that my parents were very proud of the contributions made by each employee and they greatly appreciated their tremendous efforts."

Perkin said he often visited his father and even worked a part-time job packaging and processing work orders for the Central Store Division at the building.

Perkin-Elmer, producers of scientific instruments and precision lenses, was once one of Norwalk's largest employers with about 1,600 people working at the headquarters alone. It employed more than 6,000 people in Connecticut, most of whom worked in one of seven buildings along Route 7 between Norwalk and Danbury.

The company was founded in 1937 and the headquarters at

761 Main Ave. opened in 1951. The building closed down and had been vacant since 2000.

Perkin-Elmer is now known as Applera and is based in the Merritt 7 Corporate Park in Norwalk. There is a Perkin-Elmer company in Shelton, which is a former division of the original Perkin-Elmer that was sold to another company.

Diane Cotter Leisching, one of the organizers of the reunion event, said more than 125 people responded in advance to say they would be attending. On Wednesday at the event, she said the turnout was much greater. An hour into the four-hour long Open House, the organizers had already run out of name tags.

"People are interested to see what's going to be here," Leisching said.

i.Park is known for purchas-

ing contaminated sites and restoring them back to usefulness. Representatives from i.Park were on hand Wednesday to lead tours and talk with former Perkin-Elmer employees.

Giant posters on the wall gave visitors a glimpse of what i.Park Norwalk will look like, while framed photos of yesterday displayed on tables offered a look at the past. One framed collection of pictures and memorabilia featured the original check for \$1,000 that started the company and a clipping from *The Norwalk Hour* about the damage sustained in the flood of October 1955.

According to Leisching, i.Park may incorporate a Perkin-Elmer memorial into the building's plans.

Ed Bloch, a former director of corporate communications

for Perkin-Elmer and one of the organizers of Wednesday's event, said i.Park was gracious in allowing the event to be held.

"It's wonderful of them," he said. "They've been more than hospitable."

Former employees were allowed to walk throughout the building and find their former work stations. The back buildings were off limits due to renovations.

"It's quite moving to see where you put in so many years and so much effort," Bloch said.

The idea for the reunion came from Don Mahon, a retired Perkin-Elmer employee and Florida resident who read this summer on *The Hour Online* that the building had been purchased.