

"Len" Rippa, Leonard I.

Leonard I. Rippa "Len" 82, of Smyrna, DE passed away February 22nd, 2010 from heart failure at Kent General Hospital.

Len was born in St. Petersburg, Fla., on September 19, 1927, the son of the late Hinda (Landfield) and Guss Rippa.

At the age of 17, towards the end of the WWII in 1945, Len enlisted and served honorably in the United States Coast Guard. Len went on to graduate from the University of Alabama with a BA in History, The Air Force Institute of Technology and the United States Air Force Command and Staff College. Len received his Air Force commission in 1950.

Len culminated a distinguished career in the United States Air Force in 1974, after serving in the Pentagon on a joint military/civilian Presidential commission for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve. Among his many awards, Colonel Rippa was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism in Vietnam, and the Legion of Merit for distinguished achievement as a senior staff officer in the United States Air Force. Len also received an Air Force commendation for his service in the 58th Aerospace Rescue recovery squadron for the Apollo and Gemini aerospace program.

Following his retirement from the United States Air Force he served as Director of Administration of the Defense Manpower Commission, a two-year Presidential study commission from 1974 to 1975.

In addition to his association with executive service, Len had a distinguished career in the public sector. He was appointed Confidential Assistant to the Administrator of the General Services Administration in 1975 during the Ford Presidency.

Mr. Rippa's service at the U.S. Chamber began in 1977 with an appointment as Executive Director of Citizens Choice, the grassroots arm of the U.S. Chamber. His service with the U.S. Chamber was interrupted by a three-year appointment from 1980 to 1983 as head of the Congressional Affairs office of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU), the largest non-partisan association lobbying on behalf of the taxpayer. As Executive Director, he had the responsibility of developing, organizing and implementing the legislative activities of the NTU.

Len returned to the U.S. Chamber in 1983 and was appointed Business Manager. He retired from the U.S. Chamber in 1994 after making a major contribution to the financial well being of the U.S. Chamber.

After his retirement, Len and his wife Lillian Rippa relocated to Smyrna DE where Len continued to use his skills and volunteered his time to help improve his new hometown. Len was elected to the Smyrna Town Council in 2001 and served as Vice Mayor for the three-year term.

Len served as founding President of the Smyrna Main Street Association, which was organized to revitalize the historic downtown district.

As Co-Chair of Smyrna's Capital Campaign and Executive Restoration Committees, Len was actively



involved in raising funds to restore the former Smyrna Opera House constructed in 1870. He also served as President of the Smyrna /Clayton Heritage Association.

In his free time, he served on the Board of the Ecological Research and Development Group (ERDG); an Internationally recognized non-profit wildlife conservation organization as their financial advisor.

Although Leonard Rippa had many accomplishments in his lifetime, none could be greater than his accomplishments in the role of husband, father and grandfather. Len was a devoted husband and it was clear to everyone how Len and Lillian Rippa enriched each other's lives in so many ways. Family was everything to Len and came before all else. He was the family advisor, consoler, encourager and educator. Friends could see him walking his grandson home from school everyday for the five years his grandson attended elementary school. He enjoyed taking his grandchildren and great grandchild fishing and often, kept himself busy taking his granddaughter to her many activities.

Len is survived by his loving wife Lillian Rippa of 36 years, his four children, Paul Rippa of New Mexico, Paula Peters and her husband Mike of California, Glenn Gauvry, and his wife Mariko of Little Creek DE, Gayle Moore of Smyrna; grandchildren Jonathan, Jenna, Mason and Julia, great grandchild Gage and extended family. He was predeceased by his parents and by his brothers Peter and Al Rippa.

A funeral service will be held on Friday, February 26th at the Faries Funeral Home, where family and friends can gather from 5-7 p.m. Service will be at 7p.m.

Committal Service will be held at the Arlington Cemetery in Arlington Virginia on March 31st at 9:00 a.m. Leonard Rippa will receive full military honors on this day.