

H. R. Keller & Co., Inc. regrets to announce the passing of our founder, Henry R. Keller. He will be dearly missed.

Henry R. Keller



Henry R. Keller, 93, died peacefully at his Florida residence on Sunday, July 25, 2010. He was born in Buffalo, NY and graduated from East High School, receiving the Jesse Ketchum medal for academic excellence. He graduated from Cornell University in 1939 with a Bachelors degree in Mathematics and an Army ROTC commission as 2nd Lieutenant. He taught Mathematics in the Buffalo Public Schools until being called to active duty in World War II, where he served as an artillery officer.

He married his high school sweetheart, the former Dorothy Aschbacher on May 3, 1941 before leaving for active duty. As a battery commander for the 151st Field Artillery Battalion he fought in Tunisia and Italy. In September 1943 his unit supported the 36th Infantry Division's landing at Salerno, firing more artillery rounds in eight days than in the entire Tunisian campaign, all while under fire from German coastal defenses. He was awarded the Bronze Star and received a field promotion to the rank of Army Major.

Upon return from service, Henry worked as comptroller for an auto dealership and started an insurance practice. In 1953 he started Henry R. Keller Associates, Inc., an innovator in providing installment financing for auto insurance premiums and thus pioneered the insurance premium finance industry. He was called to New York City by the state's Banking Department to help draft Article XII-B of the NY Banking Law, which is substantially intact today. In 1964, Henry started H. R. Keller & Co. as a wholesale surplus lines brokerage, which he later spun off to two key employees. He served as President of the Insurance Premium Finance Association for more than 20 years and retired in 1982, selling his business to Buffalo Savings Bank. In 1984 his son Eric reacquired H. R. Keller & Co. from Henry's successors.

He was active in fundraising for the YMCA and Boy Scouts of America, was a three-time Paul Harris Fellow of Rotary International and a deacon and trustee of Westminster Presbyterian Church. He led the Kenmore Friends of the Library to achieve the building of the new Kenmore Public Library in 1976. Henry then assisted the Riverside Friends of the Library to establish the Riverside Library. He was a Master Mason of Kenmore Lodge 1132 for 57 years. He was a member of the Buffalo Club, the Saturn Club, Country Club of Buffalo in Buffalo, NY and Quail Creek Country Club and Moorings Country Club in Naples, FL.

Dorothy, his dearest wife for 65 years, preceded him in death in February 2007. He is survived by his daughter Deborah Kramer (Robert) of LaCrosse, WI, Eric Keller (Sandra) of Buffalo, NY and grandchildren Kimberly Gould, Andrew Keller and Alexandra Keller. A memorial service will be held at Westminster Church at a later date.