



William Eugene Getzen

May 9, 1932 - July 18, 2023

William Eugene Getzen, 91, died on July 18, 2023. He was born on May 9, 1932, to Tony and Leora Getzen in the small farming town of Elkhorn, Wisconsin. As a young boy, his mother encouraged him to sell tomatoes and corn at a roadside stand. At age 10, Bill started buying war bonds from his "summer corn" money, which would come in handy to pay his way through college and law school. As a teenager, his father paid Bill to sweep floors and do odd jobs at the brass musical instrument factory he founded in the family barn: The Getzen Music Company, which still thrives today. Being dissatisfied with his meager pay, Bill used his entrepreneurial mind and started selling candy bars to the factory workers to supplement his income. As a youngster, he eventually installed his own vending machine at the factory.

In 1950, Bill graduated as valedictorian of his class at Elkhorn High School. He then attended the University of Illinois, studied mechanical engineering, played varsity baseball, and joined the Chi Psi fraternity, where he served as president. After graduation in 1954, he enrolled at the University's Law College. He then met Ruth Wylie, the love of his life, who was finishing her senior year. They soon married, and Bill enlisted in the US Air Force to fulfill his ROTC obligation. He was stationed at the Wright-Patterson base in Ohio. He served as a First Lieutenant and programming director for "Aircraft and Missiles Engine Development." Ruth got a job at the base as a civilian secretary to be with him, and they soon welcomed their daughter, Linda, into

the world. After fulfilling his 2-year obligation to the Air Force, Bill returned to Illinois to complete law school.

At the encouragement of a visiting professor from Florida, Bill, Ruth, and Linda relocated to Sarasota, Florida, where Bill joined the law firm of Williams, Parker, Harrison & Dietz in 1959. They welcomed their second child, Sandra, and a few years later, a son, James. Bill was the first “Northerner” to join the firm since it was founded in 1925 and the final partner to have his name on the firm masthead when it became Williams, Parker, Harrison, Dietz & Getzen. Starting as a young jack-of-all-trades in the legal practice, he soon became an expert in real estate and condominium law.

Bill had a great sense of humor, peppering his conversations with a keen wit. He enjoyed telling a good story, often with a punchline at the end. This trait made him an excellent speaker, a quality which was helpful when he addressed the many civic organizations he was involved with and often led. He helped found the Argus Foundation in 1983, serving as president. He was honored with their Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012.

One year Bill and Ruth gifted the children tennis racquets for Christmas and announced that the family had joined The Field Club. Bill eventually served as Commodore, and the whole family played tennis and made many lifelong friends there.

Bill and Ruth had the thrill of hosting President and Mrs. Gerald Ford during their 1976 campaign event in Florida. Bill was delighted to play tennis with the President at the Field Club. Soon after that, Bill received a personal call from the President, and Bill and Ruth were honored to attend a State Dinner at the White House later that year.

Bill was predeceased by his dear wife of 67 years, Ruth. They raised children

Linda Getzen, Sandra Alger (Herb Yancer), and James Getzen (Minta). All the children returned to Sarasota after college and lived nearby, making Bill and Ruth very happy.

Bill was a loving Papa to Shawn Alger, Kasey Wesche (Tom), Bailey Alger, Wyatt Getzen, and Will Getzen. In the eyes of his children and grandchildren, Bill was both Superman and Santa Claus. He was a kind, generous, and insightful teacher of many practical things. Bill was admired for his thoughtful, sage advice, which we will all truly miss.

Bill was a long-time member of Church of the Palms-Presbyterian.

Graveside services will be private.

Tribute Wall



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* was purchased for the family of William Eugene Getzen.



July 25, 2023 at 09:43 AM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet* was purchased for the family of William Eugene Getzen.



July 24, 2023 at 05:18 PM