Ralph W. Newkirk – Biography

Our benefactor, Ralph W. Newkirk, has been a leader in South Jersey business and higher education for many years.

Ralph was born in 1925, raised in Pennsauken, and he attended Merchantville High School. Ralph’s father worked as a plumber, and his mother worked at JC Penney. The oldest of five children, Ralph was called upon to leave high school and work to help support the family. Unfortunately, Ralph’s father was killed in a terrible car accident, and in 1943, Ralph decided to join the US Army.

In the Army, Ralph joined the “Mechanized Cavalry”, where he was trained to operate tanks and other armored fighting vehicles. To this day Ralph recalls: “it took a gallon of gas just to start one of those things.” Once Ralph completed his training, he was deployed to the Philippines to prepare for the ground invasion of Japan. “I was told I would be in the first wave of the invasion.” Ralph remembers. Ralph was spared when Japan surrendered.

Following his honorary discharge, Ralph married Margaret Weyant, whom he had met while on temporary duty at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. They returned to Camden and Ralph went to work as a messenger and later a machinist for the Warren Webster Company at 16th & Federal Sts.

After being laid-off from his job, Ralph decided it was time to complete his education. With his GI benefits, he earned his high school diploma at Temple University High School in Philadelphia. In 1949 he completed his two-year degree at the College of South Jersey (now Rutgers University-Camden). He then transferred to Temple University, earned his bachelor’s degree in accounting in 1951, and began his professional career as an accountant.

Ralph established his own accounting practice, which he later merged into what is now Deloitte & Touche. Upon taking early retirement, Ralph became a member of the faculty at Rutgers Camden, where he taught auditing. Eventually, Ralph advanced to become assistant dean and MBA director at the newly established School of Business-Camden. He retired from Rutgers in 1997.

During his career, Ralph was a member of the New Jersey State Board of Accountancy, and served terms as vice president and president. He was a director and vice president of the National Association of Accountants. He also served as President of the South Jersey chapter of that association, and of the Southwest New Jersey chapter of the New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants.

Ralph has been inducted to the Temple University Accounting Alumni Hall of Fame. He is also a two-time recipient of the Rutgers Accounting Society’s Award for Teaching Excellence.