

Ernest D. Mariani

November 20, 1926 ~ August 14, 2020

Ernest D. Mariani, beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, died peacefully on August 14th, 2020 due to natural causes.

Born to Italian immigrants in Salt Lake City on November 20th, 1926, Ernest was the first member of his family to attend both college and law school (University of Utah, classes of ‘48 & ‘51) and served honorably in the United States Army during World War II.

In a remarkable, seven-decade career, Ernest enjoyed a much deserved, nearly unrivaled reputation as a skilled and honest businessman, first joining his father at the E.F. Mariani Company, only to later take over as Chairman and CEO upon his dad’s retirement in 1978. Under Ernest's leadership, the company grew significantly, nearly quadrupling its number of employees and expanding its territory from the intermountain region to the entire western United States.

What’s particularly revealing of Ernest’s character is how he responded to tragedy. In 1971, the top executives at Pyke Manufacturing Co., including Ernest’s brother-in-law Frank, were killed when their commercial airplane collided in midair with a military jet. As the sole surviving trustee, Ernest stepped in as acting President with the hope of keeping the decimated company afloat to protect the financial security of the grieving families. He ended up remaining at this post for 23 years, during which time, the company not only survived, but thrived, nearly tripling in size.

In addition to running two successful companies, Ernest was very active in the Salt Lake community at large, serving on the Board of Trustees for both Holy Cross and St. Mark’s Hospitals, as well as Director of the National Association of Manufacturers, President of the Utah Manufacturers Association, Vice President of the Utah State Board of Regents, Chairman of the Utah Higher Education Finance Committee, Chairman of the American Apparel Association, and an Advisory Board Member for First Security Bank, Utah State Business, and the University of Utah. He also served as President of the Salt Lake Country Club.

But even more impressive than Ernest’s extensive business resume was his devotion to his family. He married Geraldene Thompson in 1950 and, together, raised three children: Lynne (d. 1994, Michael Zimmerman), Leigh (Joel VandenAkker), and E. Marc (Michelle) Mariani, who, in turn, blessed him with nine grandchildren and fifteen great-grandchildren. He was also very close to, and is survived by, his sister Jeanne Kimball. After the death of his beloved wife Geri in 1991, Ernest married Isabel Diaz, who pre-deceased him in 2019.

In his leisure time, Ernest enjoyed golfing, baseball, and coaching little league. He was a prolific reader and a proud Catholic who cherished his faith throughout his entire life.

The family would like to especially thank Meleane Mahe, who cared for Ernest in his final years. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no public funeral service is being held. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to either the University of Utah Music Department or St. Ambrose Church.