



Richard L. Kleen

May 25, 1927 - July 9, 2008

Richard Lothair Kleen of St. Michaels died July 9, 2008. He was 81.

Mr. Kleen was born May 25, 1927, in Brooklyn, N.Y., the only child of Mary Hoffman and Lothair F. Kleen. He grew up in Freeport, Long Island, N.Y., and graduated from Freeport High School in 1944. He then attended Rutgers University and graduated in 1949 with a Bachelor of Science degree in education. He earned a master's degree from Rutgers in 1950. While at Rutgers, he was a member of the Delta Kappa Epsilon Fraternity and served as a judge on the university student court. His years at Rutgers were interrupted by two years of service in the U.S. Army.

In 1951, Mr. Kleen accepted a position as a teacher of English and social studies in the Talbot County Public Schools. He taught at St. Michaels High School for almost 40 years. During that period, he served as guidance counselor for three years, but his love of teaching led him to resign from that position and return to the classroom where he taught contemporary issues, U.S. history and academic English.

Mr. Kleen coached the St. Michaels Chess Team for 25 years. During those years, the team never had a losing season. He also coached track and cross country. For many years, he anonymously gave a scholarship to a graduating senior from St. Michaels High School. In 2005, he set up the Dick Kleen Fund

of the Mid-Shore Community Foundation, a permanently endowed scholarship fund, to be given to a graduating senior who has shown the most interest in the social studies, especially government, politics and history.

An avid birder, Kleen searched for birds in all the 50 states and in 12 foreign countries. He was a founder of the Talbot County Bird Club and served as its president off and on over the next 20 years. In 1956, he was elected president of the Maryland Ornithology Society.

In 1992, he was awarded the society's achievement medal for introducing so many of his students to the study of birds. Mr. Kleen traveled to many states and countries to add to his U.S. life list and his world life list. He had observed close to 1,000 species of birds. During the 34 years he lived on Broad Creek, he recorded 176 species of birds on his property.

A long time volunteer at the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, he donated from his extensive collection of birding and natural history books, the first 450 books to the library. In addition to books, Mr. Kleen also collected paintings of famous bird artists, political buttons, stamps and McDonald's happy meal toys.

Mr. Kleen was an enthusiastic gardener. At one time, he grew more than 300 varieties of iris, and he served as president of the Maryland Iris Society. He also loved to travel, make lists and play bridge.

Another of his varied interests was government and politics. He started his extensive collection of political memorabilia at the age of 9. By the time he was 14, he had collected the autographs of each of the 96 senators and many other political figures. Later in life this interest led to his teaching career, his election to the Republican Central Committee of Talbot County, his appointment as an alternate delegate to the 1992 Republican Nominating Convention in Houston and his serving as Talbot County's co-director of Ellen Sauerbrey's campaign for governor in 1994.

He could be found most Monday mornings having breakfast at Denny's discussing the issues of the day with Steve Kinlock and Mac McConnell. Then it was off to meet with Curry Wilford to share his latest discovery of an undervalued stock. He was an ardent investor and shared this passion with his students, inspiring many of them to invest for the future. Although born into a Lutheran family, Kleen became an Episcopalian, served on the vestry and was a docent of Christ Church in St. Michaels.

He is survived by his chosen family, former students, friends and the thousands of people he touched. He was a mentor to many and a friend to all. He will especially be missed by his "Big Four," Don Meritt of Easton, John Valliant of Easton, Ken Schisler of Bozman and Kurt Leuschner of California, and their families.

Memorial services will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, July 19, at Christ Church, St. Michaels.

Memorial donations may be made to the Dick Kleen Fund of the Mid-Shore Community Foundation, 102 East Dover St., Easton, MD 21601 or Talbot Hospice Foundation, 586 Cynwood Drive, Easton, MD 21601.

Arrangements by Fellows, Helfenbein & Newnam Funeral Home, P.A., Easton.

Tribute Wall



“ *Richard L. Kleen*

October 26, 2023 at 06:42 PM

SL

Dick Kleen was the best teacher I ever had. He is the reason that I became a teacher. Rest in peace sir!

Steve L. - January 05, 2025 at 10:56 PM



“ *Richard L. Kleen*

January 28, 2023 at 12:44 PM



“ *Richard L. Kleen*

January 28, 2023 at 08:03 AM