

Leonard C. Kirberg, 76, Civil Engineering Leader

Leonard C. Kirberg, civil engineer, innovative industry leader, and past Chairman, CEO and President of Horner & Shifrin, Inc. from 1988 to 2004, passed away on Wednesday (June 19, 2019), at the age of 76. Leading the fourth generation of company management, he was known for extensive revitalization and growth of the established firm, founded in 1933. After employment in 1966-7 with McDonnell Douglas Corporation, he served 38-years of his professional career at the firm.

Leonard Carl Kirberg was born in St. Louis in March 18, 1943 to Karl and Lorraine Kirberg. He earned the rank of Eagle Scout and attended Lindbergh High School. He received his B. S in Civil Engineering from the University of Missouri – Rolla in 1966, a Professional Development Degree in Engineering Management – 1978 and an Honorary Professional Degree in Civil Engineering – 1986. From the University of Missouri, Rolla. He was a Licensed Professional Engineer in Missouri and Illinois.

He is remembered by his loving family, his clients, staff and professional colleagues alike as a steady hand at the helm, a resourceful team builder and an approachable, sympathetic leader. He made friends easily and tempered his relationships and decisions with calm analysis, practicality and a warm sense of humor. He counseled his staff and employees that the key to marketing professional services was to build relationships with them as fellow human beings, and the work assignments would follow. He was a good listener, unassuming in manner and trusting of his colleagues and staff. Many credited a large measure of his success to his encouragement and help for his people to reach their full potential. From an early age he loved to build things with his father. By the peak of his career, he had expanded his creative achievements from model trains to Metrolink.

Surviving him are his wife of 52 years, Mary C. Kirberg (nee Stolsek), his siblings, Kent (Pat), Mary Ellen (Scott), Gary (Shari), Sue (Steve) and brothers-in-law Fred (Bev) and Frank. And many nieces and nephews.

Despite his wide-ranging responsibilities, Mr. Kirberg found time to take an active role in a number of technical, business and professional development organizations. He was president of the Engineers' Club of St. Louis (1991-92) and served on the board of directors and as chairman of several committees. He was past president (1984-1985) of the St. Louis Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers, an organization that recognized him with its Professional Recognition Award in 1988. He was past President (1981-1982) of the St. Louis Chapter of the Missouri Society of Professional Engineers, an organization that named him Young Engineer of the Year in 1976 and Engineer of the Year in 1992. He also was past President (1994-95) of the Consulting Engineers Council of Missouri, an organization that named him New Principal of the Year in 1987. He also contributed his talents to the American Public Works Association, the Water Environment Federation, the Society of American Military Engineers, and the Illinois Society of Professional Engineers. For the 1996-7 term, he was elected President of the Academy of Civil Engineers at the University of Missouri – Rolla.

In addition, he participated in many civic organizations, including St. Louis Ambassadors, St. Louis Counts and the Boy Scouts of America – St Louis, Circle Club, and the Downtown Rotary Club, serving also as President of Rotary's Skyway Farm. A proud member of Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity, he was involved in numerous charitable expansion and fundraising projects. He was particularly proud of a committee he chaired, which succeeded in raising over two million dollars for renovation of Rolla's chapter's fraternity house and his selection as the fraternity's "Man of the Year" in 1965.

As a final gift, Mr. Kirberg specified that his body be donated to Washington University, for the advancement of medical science.

Mary Kirberg was asked what the most significant thing was that attracted her to Len. She said simply, "It is his compassion, his ability to feel what another person is feeling." Perhaps it is this quality, coupled with some good common sense and a lot of hard work over many years, that propelled Len Kirberg to the top, not only in his profession, but in the opinion of those who know him. Mary concluded, "He was my best friend and soul mate."

A memorial service will be held at a date to be announced. In lieu flowers, the Backstoppers, P.O Box 795168, St. Louis MO 63179, Lambda Chi Alpha, 1705 Pine St., Rolla, MO or The Humane Society of St. Louis.