

Ronald L. White, 79, former executive with a number of well-known national companies including Royal Typewriter, Arby's and Royal Crown Cola, died Sunday, May 23rd at his home in the Riderwood Village retirement community in Silver Spring, Maryland after a long and valiant battle with melanoma cancer.

Ron was born in July 1930, in York, Pennsylvania, the only child of Clarence and Grace White. His father was a wallpaper printer for the York Paper Co. His mother was an office assistant at York International Corporation. He lived his entire childhood on Florida Ave. and graduated from William Penn Senior High School. In his youth Ron dreamed of becoming a major league baseball player and found success as a pitcher in York county high school leagues. In the end however, he pursued a competing professional goal and went on to receive his bachelor's and master's degrees from the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1954, after completing his studies, he became a commissioned U.S. Naval Supply Officer on shore duty in Northern Germany for two-and-a-half years.

In a career that spanned five decades and leadership positions in over ten companies, Ron moved around the country and traveled extensively around the world. His professional life demanded that he lead corporate turnarounds, roll-ups and outsourcing, in many cases before these terms were part of common business terminology. Starting in the late 1950s with Air Products and Chemicals Inc. in Allentown, Pennsylvania, he next moved across town to Mack Trucks, Inc., and then to Peat, Marwick, Main & Co. and Litton Industries in the 1960s. From there he went on to become president of both Royal Typewriter Co. in Hartford, Connecticut in the early 1970s and Tenna Corp. in Cleveland, Ohio (maker of the first electric car antenna) later that decade, and he finished the 1970s at Arby's in Boardman, Ohio. In the early 1980s he had a stint with Roxbury of America in Beverly Hills, California, where he learned about franchising from Al Lapin Jr., founder of the IHOP chain, which led him to Atlanta, Georgia and the CFO position at Royal Crown Cola. Later that decade in Atlanta he also held executive positions at TDS Healthcare Systems and EGL Holdings before founding his own consulting firm in the 1990s, which he named The Janelle Company after the birth of his first granddaughter.

He was an active and vocal advocate for mental health care, volunteering hundreds of hours with several organizations while living in Atlanta, Georgia. He served first as a director, then as a Vice-President, and later on the advisory board of the Georgia division of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. In addition, he worked for seven years on the DeKalb County Regional Board for Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse, helping to administer its multi-million dollar budget. Active in the Atlanta business community, he was a dedicated member of the Buckhead Rotary for nineteen years, chairing for a time its Caring Hands Committee. He also helped counsel unemployed executives through the Financial Executives Institute in Atlanta.

He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Estheranne (Wieder) White, and sons Bradford White of Greenville, North Carolina, Clifford White of Potomac, Maryland, and Erick White of Ithaca, New York; daughters-in-law Linda and Debbie, and five grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held on Friday, June 4, 2010 at 2 p.m. with a visitation one hour prior at St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church, 5450 Massachusetts Ave., Bethesda, Maryland. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Wellness Community of Greater Washington DC or the National Alliance on Mental Illness. At a later date his ashes will be inurned in a columbarium in Arlington National Cemetery.