

Obituary: Stephen Zangrillo, 91, Sport Shop Founder and Pillar of Darien

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[From](#) *the Edward Lawrence Funeral Home website:*

Stephen Frank Zangrillo, 91, passed away peacefully on July 8, 2015 at his home in Darien. He was surrounded by his family.

Born on Dec. 26, 1923, Mr. Zangrillo was a lifelong Darien resident. The son of the late Mae and Patsy Zangrillo, he was born in their home on Fitch Ave. He was also predeceased by his brother Peter Zangrillo, and his sisters Ann Sherwood and Ceil Danna.

Mr. Zangrillo served in the U.S. Army during World War II from 1943-45 as an army corporal in the South Pacific. When he returned from the war, he opened the Darien Sport Shop on Aug. 1, 1946.

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He founded the store with little to no money in his pocket, but saw the business grow and expand over the years to what is now considered a town landmark and shopping destination in Fairfield County.

Mr. Zangrillo had a knack for building relationships with his customers. If a young man couldn't afford a suit that he wanted, he gave it to him anyway, trusting his customer to come back and pay for it when he could. If a young boy couldn't afford the baseball glove he wanted, he let the boy have it anyway, as long as the boy paid him back. He knew the only way to earn the trust of the people of Darien, was to put his trust in them.

While much of his career consisted of running the day to day operations, he spent his later years greeting his customers and friends at the front door. He ran his business under one main principle: the customer is always right.

Mr. Zangrillo dedicated his life to serving the town of Darien through his store and charitable efforts. He was a charter member of the Country Club of Darien in 1956, where he was the first men's golf club champion in 1957. He served as the President of the Darien Chamber of Commerce in 1960 and he donated the first ambulance to Post 53 in 1976.

He also hosted the community at the annual Christmas tree lighting in the Darien Sport Shop parking lot every year since 1978. When the 100 foot tree was taken down in 2009 due to storm damage, he insisted the tree be replaced so the annual tree lighting would continue to be held every year.

Mr. Zangrillo continued to open his store every day well past his 90th birthday. He loved his store, and the town.

His family was his greatest success though. He loved his wife, his four children, and six grandchildren more than anything.

He is survived by his wife, Yolanda; his son Stephen Jr. and his wife Pam, his son Anthony and his wife Gina, his daughters Stephanie and Gina; his six grandchildren, Stephen III and his wife Danielle, Gregory Reilly, Nicholas Neville, Douglas Reilly, Samantha Neville, Allison Reilly, and his brother Robert.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held at St. John's Church, 1986 Post Road, Darien on Monday, July 13 at 11 am. Burial will follow at Spring Grove Cemetery in Darien.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Darien EMS Post 53, P. O. Box 2066, Darien, CT 06820 or the United States Wounded Soldiers Foundation, 11700 Preston Road, Ste. 660, PMB 135, Dallas, TX 75230.

(Arrangements by [Edward Lawrence Funeral Home](#).)