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Ralph Perschino, 93, Former Darien Schools Official, Honored for WWII Combat

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Date : January 16, 2018

Ralph J. Perschino, loving husband and father, dedicated teacher, beloved principal, and highly respected associate superintendent of Darien Public Schools, passed away peacefully at the Meadow Ridge Health Center on Jan. 4, at the age of 93.

His family was at his bedside. Although much of his body had been taken by Parkinson's disease, his quick mind, penetrating memory, and the sparkle in his eyes remained intact.

Ralph was born to Mary and John Perschino, on April 30, 1924 in Norwalk, the oldest of seven children. His love of learning and sports (especially baseball), his work ethic, and his high moral standards, followed him

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throughout his years at Norwalk High School, the University of Connecticut, New Haven State Teacher's College, and Yale University, and contributed to the gifted educator that he became.

Ralph's formal education was interrupted, like many others of the Greatest Generation, by the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the United States' entry into World War II. As usual, Ralph never did anything part-way.

— [an obituary](#) from *Hoyt Funeral Home*

He enlisted in the Marine Corps in March 1943 and trained at Paris Island, Camp Lejeune, Norfolk Naval Base, Treasure Island, Camp Pendleton and Camp Elliott.

Ralph was part of about every assault in the South Pacific over the next three years — including Emirau, the Bismarck Archipelago, Pavuvu (twice), the Solomon Islands, Pelelieu, Okinawa, Guam, and three times on Guadalcanal. Ralph ended his tour of duty as a corporal combat Marine on mainland China, and was discharged in February of 1946.

Although Ralph rarely spoke of his years in the South Pacific and never spoke of his medals, his family would like the people who knew him to know that he received the Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Presidential Citation, and about every commendation, campaign, and service award available.

When Ralph returned home, he was ready to continue not only his education, but his courtship of Gloria Marie Carangelo. The two had met at UConn shortly before Ralph enlisted and they had written to each other throughout the war. They married in 1947 and would share their lives for the next 70 years. Gloria survives him.

They had three daughters: Ellen Ann Stein of Providence, R.I. (who predeceased him), Susan Perschino of Brooklyn, N.Y. and Carol Miller, of Ridgefield. Ralph is also survived by his granddaughter, Kineta Wahl, also of Brooklyn, and sons-in-law, Charles H. K. Wahl and Jeremiah S. Miller.

Ralph's siblings include Lucille Brown of New Canaan, John Perschino of Norwalk (predeceased), Marie Webb of Norwalk (predeceased), Arthur Perschino of Ocean, N.J., Walter Perschino of Norwalk, and Diane Scarpone of Norwalk.

Ralph taught in New Haven for a year after graduating from college. In 1951, he was recruited by the Darien Public Schools, where he taught, and then became assistant principal at Hindley School. In 1956, he became the first principal of Tokeneke School. Ralph would go on to become associate superintendent of Darien Schools, but his 20 years at Tokeneke were the ones he would cherish.

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Hundreds of former students and their families remained in contact with Ralph throughout his later life, in honor of the man who had given them so much, including in some cases, his famous “silver dollar” award.

When he retired in 1984, he and Gloria made their dream of living and working in an antique shop come true. They purchased The Red Petticoat, also known as the 1740 Benjamin Rockwell House, in Ridgefield.

The Red Petticoat was the oldest antique store in town, and with the help of their daughter, Carol, it soon became the largest. With seven rooms of treasures, beautiful grounds, good conversation, and Ralph’s freshly baked cookies, it also was the most welcoming. For the next 25 years, it would be a favorite destination for family and friends.

Interment will be private, but the family is planning a significant tribute to celebrate Ralph’s amazing life, within the next months. If you knew Ralph, sharing your experiences will be encouraged during this event. Further details will be announced later.