

Lloyd Eugene Rigler

BIRTH

3 May 1915

Lehr, McIntosh County, North Dakota, USA

DEATH

7 Dec 2003 (aged 88)

Hollywood, Los Angeles County, California, USA

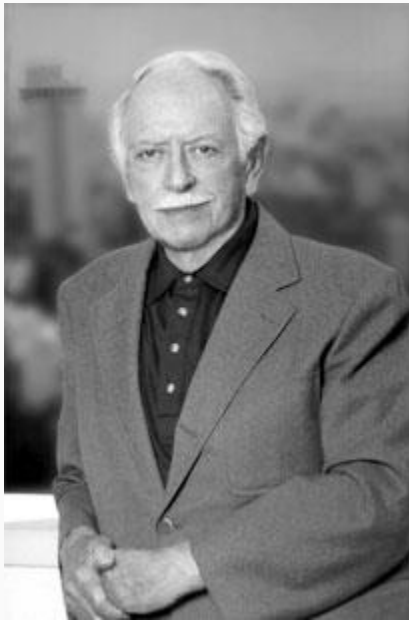
BURIAL

Burial Details Unknown

MEMORIAL ID

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DROPDOWN



LLOYD E. RIGLER

Early Sunday morning, December 7, 2003 Mr. Lloyd Rigler, the creator of Classic Arts Showcase, passed away peacefully at home in his sleep. He was 88 years old

Though it was an expected passing, we still found it difficult to believe Lloyd wouldn't be coming into the office as usual. His desk is littered with dozens of letters waiting for his replies. His chair sits waiting. A half filled glass of water sits next to his phone. His appointment book is open. There are half a dozen invitations waiting for an RSVP. Staring from the walls are signed photos of environmental, political and arts leaders grateful for Lloyd's help. Testimonies, awards, Certificates of Merit, Appreciation and Recognition adorn every corner of the office, happy to make room for more. This is the office of a man whose life was full, varied, busy, and appreciated.

Before his passing Mr. Rigler made arrangements for Classic Arts Showcase to continue broadcasting for at least another twenty years. He considered Classic Arts Showcase to be part of his legacy, and one of his great joys was to read appreciative letters from viewers.

He will be greatly missed.

Charlie Mount
CLASSIC ARTS SHOWCASE
Dec 8, 2003

Lloyd E. Rigler

Biography

Recognized as one of the most discerning arts patrons in America, Lloyd E. Rigler has practiced and preached the cost-effective use of resources in order to achieve the greatest good. From the earliest days of his success as a businessman, he has been an active philanthropist.

He and his business partner, the late Lawrence E. Deutsch, were pioneers in the field of corporate support for the arts. Long before "corporate responsibility" became a given in America, Rigler and Deutsch were building intimate relationships with a number of major performing arts organizations across the country, not merely as donors but, more importantly, as members of executive and finance committees. Today, Rigler continues this tradition of assisting arts organizations to secure a place in our society with sound fiscal policies and strategies for building ever-broadening bases of support.

The 4th of 6 children, Lloyd E. Rigler was born in Lehr, North Dakota in 1915. His family moved to Wishek, North Dakota when he was 4 years old. He grew up working in his parents' General Merchandise Store, which served a large farming community.

By age 11, he had his own business, a gift and greeting card shop, which he operated in a section of his parents' store. He was a Boy Scout at 12 and an Eagle Scout at 16. He graduated from High School after only 3 years so that he could work and begin to save for college.

In the summer of 1933, he found a ride to Chicago, where he could stay with relatives, and immediately got a job with the Edison Company selling electric irons. Shortly thereafter he was hired as a shoe salesman at Marshall Field's. By the fall of 1935 he had saved enough money to go to the University of Illinois.

He went to New York in the fall of 1939 to go into theater. To support himself, he worked as an interviewer for a market research agency, and did the initial research on the Waring Blender, becoming the top demonstrator and salesman at Ovington's, an exclusive store on 5th Avenue.

In 1940, he was hired by RCA to head Guest Relations to introduce television at their TV exhibit at the World's Fair Century of Progress, the 2nd most visited building after the General Motors

Futurama. After the Fair he was sent to Camden, New Jersey, to train as a Red Seal Record (Classic Division) Promotion Specialist covering Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia, while living in Cleveland. He came to Los Angeles in the Fall of 1941 for a vacation. When he could not get transferred by RCA, he became an L.A. City salesman for Decca Records.

He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1942. Selected for officers training, he trained at the University of Arizona and served until the war ended in 1945.

He did a stint as a motion picture agent, working with Charles Wendling, brother of Claudette Colbert, who was their most famous client, but, looking for more lucrative work, he answered an ad reading, "Enterprising salesman to dispose of a quarter of a million dollars worth of war supplies, 10% commission." It was Her Secret Brasserie Company, that had a quarter of a million dollars worth of English net, pink and blue satin, and black lace as surplus to dispose of.

He tried selling to a contact in Hong Kong, who said it was too light for clothing. Although unsuccessful, when he asked what every man, woman and child in Hong Kong used, his contact sent him a rice bowl, mentioning that children's bowls were only half filled. With plastics just coming on the market, he asked a plastic mold manufacturer what it would cost to make a mold of the same bowl in a baby size and the cost to produce them. He then asked Hong Kong if they would be interested. They agreed to order 150 gross with an irrevocable letter of credit, which guaranteed the mold maker to produce the mold and bowls on his money, which was pre-paid in the bank and released when the bowls were shipped.

While doing this, Mr. Rigler became a food broker, representing the packers of Dawn Fresh Mushrooms and Soups. In order to get these products placed in Supermarkets, he had to have a place where he could store and easily access inventory so that he could pick up and deliver from his own car.

A friend from his movie agent days, Marshall Edson, had gotten backing to produce "The Taming of the Shrew" with Shelley Winters and John Ireland; he needed an office, so he rented a 25 by 100 foot store front, operating Zippy Cleaners there to pay the rent. He used only the front of the store, so Mr. Rigler rented the area behind the drop-off counter for storing his mushrooms.

Here he met the manager of Zippy Cleaners, Lawrence Deutsch, who was on loan from the New York City Opera, where he served as an assistant to their first artistic director, Lazlo Halaz. Deutsch also assisted in the production of The Taming of the Shrew, directed by Mr. Halaz's friend, Eugene Brieden. While at the New York Opera City Opera, Deutsch met Julius Rudel, who replaced Halaz. It was Rudel who brought singers such as Samuel Ramey, Catherine Malfitano, Placido Domingo, Jose Carreras, and Michael Devlin to the New York City Opera, and created a memorable relationship with Norman Treigle and Beverly Sills. While Marshall Edson was searching for new plays to produce, Mr. Deutsch continued managing Zippy Cleaners and began typing letters for Rigler's Export and Food Brokerage at \$.25 per letter. When his bill was \$18.00 one month, Mr. Rigler gave him a share of the business. To save money, they became partners as Rigler and Deutsch Food Brokers, moved out of the Zippy Cleaners building, and opened their own Dawn Fresh Valet Service a few blocks away, with storage space for the mushrooms in the back.

They discovered Adolph's Meat Tenderizer at a Santa Barbara restaurant owned by Adolph Rempp. They represented Rempp as food brokers and finally bought the name and recipe in 1948 and introducing it in 1949 on the Home Show on Los Angeles television. In 1953, Rigler and Deutsch were featured in a story in Reader's Digest, which was printed in 14 languages, and Adolph's was introduced to the world. Their company was acquired by Chesebrough Ponds in 1974, which was acquired by Lever Brothers several years later. Today, Adolph's is owned by Unilever.

Rigler and Deutsch created a foundation in the early 1950s as soon as they started to accumulate money. With the sale of Adolph's, they began concentrating on philanthropy, with their chief interest being the Arts. They were instrumental in getting the newly founded Los Angeles Opera, of which Deutsch was president, to bring the New York City Opera to the Music Center. They handled all of the administrative duties and had a regular season of 28 performances of 14 different operas for 16 years. They were among the first founders of the Los Angeles Music Center, and founders of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

In 1977, Deutsch succumbed to lung cancer from smoking, leaving his estate to the Foundation. Deutsch had been an avid collector of records and had always wanted to share that music with the world. Rigler discovered that everything that had been commercially recorded since the first Edison cylinder up through 1946 was stored in boxes in 5 different libraries - the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, and the libraries at Yale, Syracuse and Stanford. He received permission from the copyright office to provide audio copies to anyone who requested one of the records from the archive for \$5.00 and catalogue the information on each recording, including photographing each label, and underwrote the project, which came to be known as the Rigler & Deutsch Index of Recorded Sound and can be seen in every library in the United States. Many of the current re-releases of recordings on CD owe their discovery to the Rigler & Deutsch Index.

Rigler was on the board of directors of the Los Angeles Philharmonic for more than 20 years, as well as of the Board of City Center of Music and Drama in New York and Community Television of Southern California, station KCET in Los Angeles. He served as co-chairman of the New York City Opera, until demoted to vice-chairman, and introduced the Student Coalition for the Arts, an audience development project.

Rigler has always believed in the potential of public television. His support of KCET has always been focused on widening the station's outreach. When the station needed new members, for example, Rigler said, "broaden your signal and you will increase your constituency". So, he purchased a new antenna for the station, and the result was a now historic increase in the station's support base of 18 million viewers. He also provided them with closed captioning equipment.

In the 1980s, Rigler conceived of a way to assist PBS in creating revenue for new programming. PBS's method was to sell the rights to present their new productions to European television distributors for 20% of the budget, making them co-producers in the bargain. PBS retained only the rights to show a program 4 times before consigning it to the archives. Rigler wanted to clean up these old masters, put them on VHS video, and have PBS stations show clips of them and sell the cassettes direct, asking the unions to waive their usual up front copyright and artist fees until profits came in.

One of the largest archives was WNET in New York City, whose executives were at first ecstatic at Rigler's idea. When Rigler asked for a print-out of what they had, it was discovered that their titles had never been indexed. Rigler agreed to pay for the index, which took 2 years and yielded 17,800 titles. In a subsequent meeting with WNET executives, he was told that after looking at the index that they would rather sell the rights of the masters and let whoever bought them clear the rights with the unions.

Having failed to develop his project with WNET, he envisioned the creation of his own 24 hour non-commercial arts network, designed to bring the classic arts to as large an audience as possible by showing short video clips, in hopes of enticing viewers to attend and support museums and live performances in their own community. Rigler had been tracking the ticket sales of live performances for many years, and found that arts organizations were performing to more empty seats every year - selling fewer tickets and charging more for them. With present audiences aging and dying and little or no arts exposure in our homes and schools, Rigler envisioned a way to expose the largest possible number of viewers to the arts, feeling that he might be able to develop a new audience.

Launched on May 3, 1994, and available today in over 50 million homes, Classic Arts Showcase is a not-for-profit 24-hour Satellite Programming Service provided free of charge to local public service channels, cable and broadcast stations from G1R-Ch. 5.