

Col. (ret.) Frank L. Serpico, Sr.

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On Oct. 21, 2014 Col. (Ret.) Frank Lawrence Serpico crossed this world's final "Line of Departure" and began his last and greatest mission.

Born in New Jersey on Oct. 29, 1929 Frank regularly remarked that his birth, while simultaneous with the Great Stock Market Crash, did not cause the event.

Frank enlisted in the Army in 1947 before finishing high school, and served two years as a hospital corpsman. While he loved the structure and purpose that the military provided, he also realized that he wanted the chance to lead soldiers as a commissioned officer; in the post-World War II Army that meant earning a college degree.

His path took him to Blair Academy in New Jersey, allowing him to earn his high school diploma on the GI Bill. The University of Delaware offered him a football scholarship on graduation. Dubbed "The Splendid Splinter" by his teammates (at 5-feet, 10-inches, he weighed 165 pounds), Serpico lettered for the Blue Hens in the 1951-52-53 seasons as an end and kicker. He was also president of his fraternity, Pi Kappa Alpha, and joined the Army ROTC program.

Frank received his commission as a 2LT in the Army in field artillery. His first overseas mission was with the 2nd Missile Battalion (Nike-Hercules) to protect the Republic of Taiwan from attack by the communist People's Republic of China. Subsequent assignments included two tours in Vietnam (6th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery, 1966-67; 1st Battalion, 8th Field Artillery, 1969) and tours in Germany, Washington, D.C. and other locations in the United States.

Promoted to colonel his final assignment, Commander of ROTC Region I, allowed him to mentor and guide others to begin their service to the nation.



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Following his retirement from the Army, Frank worked for several years in Saudi Arabia advising the Saudi National Guard. It was there he met Marilyn Nordquist, a nurse working in the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center. They were married in 1983, and lived in Kissimmee, Fla. and Ocean Park, Wash. before moving to Fountain Hills in 1994.

While in Fountain Hills Frank was active in the Men's Club, the Fountain Hills Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7507 and maintained a busy social schedule with friends and family.

Frank believed strongly that individuals are responsible to make their communities better, and lived that ethos throughout his life. While in Ocean Park, Frank worked tirelessly to support the historic Fort Stevens Park at the mouth of the Columbia River. He worked to revitalize the Fountain Hills VFW Post, growing the membership significantly during his presidency. Many other causes benefitted from his efforts, inspiring others to support their communities.

In addition to his degrees from Blair Academy and the University of Delaware, he earned his Master's degree in education from the University of Georgia; Master's in Business from the University of Pennsylvania; and was a graduate of the Command and General Staff College. His awards include the Legion of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Bronze Star (with five clusters), the Air Medal and many other lesser decorations.

He is survived by his wife, Marilyn; children, Sharon Hansen, Frank Serpico Jr. and Terry Serpico (grandchildren Calvin and Stella); a brother, Charles; a sister, Joan; numerous nieces and nephews; and stepchildren, Robyn Tafoya, John Warsinske (Marza and Kenna) and Mike Warsinske (Alice, Peter and Sid); and Sam the Standard Poodle.

He will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors.

Memorial services will be held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Fountain Hills Monday, Nov. 10, at 11 a.m.