



Robert Malcolm Ling

July 6, 1931 - April 12, 2015

Former Grapevine publisher dies at 83

Robert Ling, a colorful community leader and owner of The Grapevine Independent for more than two decades, died Sunday, April 12 at his home in Rancho Murieta. He was 83.

As publisher beginning in the early 1980s, he guided The Grapevine through turbulent times in Rancho Cordova, as Mather Air Force Base was shuttered and the drive for incorporation raged. A talented and creative leader, he served as Chairman of the Board of the Rancho Cordova Chamber of Commerce, President of the Rancho Cordova Rotary Club, and was elected Honorary Mayor of Rancho Cordova twice, among many other leadership achievements.

He was an early proponent of Rancho Cordova incorporation, and through the editorial pages of his newspaper challenged residents repeatedly with the question: “How can you fight City Hall until you have one?” During this period, The Grapevine evolved into a popular forum for the discussion of community issues. The newspaper was moved into the digital age and added color to its pages while Mr. Ling was publisher.

A gifted writer, Mr. Ling’s tenure at The Grapevine was marked with numerous awards from the community and two prestigious awards from the California

Newspaper Publishers Association, including top honors for his witty and curmudgeonly weekly commentary, "My Way," which topped Page 2 for years.

Born July 6, 1931 in Akron, OH, Mr. Ling grew up in Hasbrouck Heights, NJ where he was an outstanding athlete. His first job was as a newspaper carrier. One of his route customers was the emerging crooner, Frank Sinatra and it was the singer's famous "My Way" ballad that inspired the column he would years later pen.

Mr. Ling went on to play football for Michigan State University where he earned a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism. But his dream of being a newspaperman was interrupted by war, and he was off for a decorated tour of duty in Korea as an Army military policeman and officer, followed by a stint in Japan.

Along the way he married his college sweetheart, Lois Fisher, and the couple settled in the northern Michigan city of Marquette. There, he built a successful food business and held many leadership posts, eventually being elected to the City Commission and multiple terms as Mayor. He was especially known for his sharp wit and public speaking skills and became the city's leading emcee, hosting events which entertained many dignitaries and seating him next to famous visitors, ranging from Green Bay Packers legend Bart Starr to President Gerald Ford.

While others his age were beginning to think of retirement, Mr. Ling traveled to Sacramento in his 50s to pursue new business opportunity. He was a partner in an enterprise which went on to provide cable television services to McClellan and Mather Air Force Bases, Treasure Island and others. He later sold those franchises and bought the Grapevine. For the next 20 years, he worked alongside his daughter, Editor Shelly Blanchard, cementing his place in Rancho Cordova history.

Mr. Ling and his wife were married for 63 years and raised five children. They also opened their home to a sixth child—one of the famous “Pedro Pan” youth refugees from Cuba following the Communist takeover of that country, guiding him through high school and sending him to college.

He was an avid sports fan, having played many sports and coaching countless youth teams in everything from Little League to ice hockey. He was especially dedicated to the Michigan State University Spartans, could always be spotted wearing “Spartan Green,” and would never miss a chance to promote his alma mater.

Mr. Ling is survived by his wife, Lois, of Rancho Murieta; children, Shelly Blanchard of Rancho Cordova, Robert Ling Jr. (Heidi) of Anaheim Hills; Amy Plumbtree (Tree) of Rancho Murieta; Patricia (John) Heider of Ann Arbor, MI; and Beth (Charles) Usher of Hinsdale, IL; 17 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren.

Mr. Ling will be interred in a military ceremony at the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery in Dixon, CA during services scheduled for 9:30 a.m. Monday, April 27.

Previous Events

Service

APR 27. 9:30 AM (PT)

Sacramento Valley National Cemetery
Dixon, CA