



Leo J. Abruzzese

October 18, 1925 - November 6, 2023

Leo Joseph Abruzzese, age 98, a veteran of the Second World War and a resident of Springfield, PA for nearly 40 years, passed away peacefully in his sleep on Monday, November 6th, 2023, while in hospice care at Riddle Village Retirement Community in Media, PA. His beloved wife of 68 years, Serafina (Fina) Torrisi Abruzzese, passed away in 2016 at age 90. Leo is survived by two sons, Leo F. Abruzzese of Washington, DC and Marc C. Abruzzese of Aston, PA; a daughter-in-law, Maryann Lipiecki Abruzzese of Aston; and a grandson, Daniel Abruzzese of Wilmington.

Leo was born in South Philadelphia on October 18th, 1925. His father, Francesco (Frank) Abbruzzese, was born in Campobasso, Molise, Italy, in 1888 and emigrated to the United States in 1904. He worked as a chef for nearly 50 years at many of Philadelphia's finer hotels and clubs, including the Bellevue-Stratford. Leo's mother, Sabatina (Celia) Troisi Abbruzzese, was born in Pietradefusi, Avellino, Italy, in 1896 and came to the United States in 1908. She was mainly a homemaker but worked as a seamstress in the home-textile industry in the 1920s and 1930s, sewing men's suits.

Leo grew up during the Great Depression but had a mostly happy childhood, playing baseball and swimming at a South Philadelphia park that he and his friends called "The Lakes"—today, FDR Park. After attending Edgar Allan Poe elementary school and South Philadelphia High School in the 1930s and early

1940s, Leo followed his three older brothers, Tony, Joe and Vince, into the armed forces during the Second World War, enlisting in the U.S. Army on December 30th, 1943, not long after his 18th birthday.

After 18 months in domestic military service, Leo was sent to Seattle in mid-1945. On July 22nd he boarded a troop ship called the USS Zeilen, bound for Okinawa, a large island south of Japan that had been captured by U.S. forces the month before. Leo was to be part of the massive troop build up in the Pacific ahead of the planned Allied invasion of Japan, which U.S. officials said could have led to as many as 500,000 casualties. While Leo was still at sea on the Zeilen, two atomic bombs were dropped on Japan in early August 1945, and Japan announced its intention to surrender on August 15th. The Zeilen, and Leo, arrived in Okinawa a few days later, by which time most of the fighting had stopped.

Leo was part of an Army company that spent the next several months rounding up enemy soldiers who were holding out in caves, or who did not believe that Japan had surrendered. Leo later got to know and like some of the captured Japanese soldiers, who were young and far from home, like him. While on Okinawa, Leo was promoted to Corporal and became company clerk. Decades later, he liked to tell family and friends that he was the original Radar O'Reilly, the character from M*A*S*H.

Leo was honorably discharged from the Army in mid-1946 and married Serafina Torrisi on April 10th, 1948. Although they grew up on the same street in Philadelphia in the 1930s, just two houses apart, they didn't get to know each other until after the war. They would have two sons during the 1950s and, over time, moved to Southwest Philadelphia, then to the borough of Colwyn in Delaware County in the 1960s. While in Colwyn, Leo was active in local politics. He served on the borough council in the 1960s and was mayor on two occasions in the 1970s. He and Fina moved to Springfield, their final

home, in 1985.

Leo spent his entire career in the trucking industry, starting out as a warehouse worker in the 1950s. He later became a terminal manager in the 1960s and 1970s for trucking companies in Philadelphia and New Jersey, managing the movement of freight throughout the mid-Atlantic states. By the 1980s he was a labor negotiator for these same companies and was often involved in tense talks with Teamsters union officials in Philadelphia and northern New Jersey.

Leo retired in the early 1990s, and he and Fina spent the next decade travelling around the country, with trips to Florida, the Midwest, the South and California. They travelled to Montreal and later to Europe, visiting London, Rome, Paris and the Normandy beaches. In the 2000s they would regularly travel to Clearwater, Florida in March to watch the Philadelphia Phillies during Spring Training.

During the many decades they spent in Springfield, Leo and Fina became neighborhood favorites, often taking evening walks, holding hands. They became the honorary Grandfather and Grandmother of the neighborhood, and never missed christenings, graduations and holidays for children who lived nearby. They were especially close to Joe and Linda Johnson and their family.

As he had been throughout his life, Leo was a devoted Phillies fan, never missing a game on television in his later years. When the Phillies were playing well, even if it was in April and May, he would sometimes tell family and friends, "Get your World Series tickets now!"

Leo was an outgoing, friendly man, always ready with a story and happy to help anyone who needed it. He loved his family very much and was especially

proud of his grandson. He was always surrounded by loving family and friends, particularly during the final years of his life. He will be deeply missed.

Services & Interment will be held privately

Tribute Wall

LA

“ 4 files added to the album *Abruzzese*



Leo F. Abruzzese - December 06, 2023 at 06:20 AM

PH

“ *I will always fondly remember Leo as attending our all women music club. Since he was the only man there, he was catered to by the female members who liked to sit next to him and talk about his life and especially his love of the Philly's. since we came from the same section of South Philly, we bonded immediately. I will miss this man and hope that his family can find comfort in knowing how deeply he was liked by all who met him. Rest in Peace, Leo.*

Peg Holback - November 15, 2023 at 09:08 PM