



PORTSMOUTH – William R. Mershon, LCDR USN (Ret), age 93, of Portsmouth, RI, died Friday, April 28, 2017, at Newport Hospital. Mr. Mershon, Bill to his many friends, was born June 25, 1923, in Stamford, CT, the son of the late John William Mershon and the late Lydia (Sonn) Mershon. He was the former husband of the late Jennie Lee Langdon and the late Dortha Guenther.

Bill Mershon served in the US Navy for 22 years in both WWII and Korea. Notable in his years of service was a 1944 deployment in China as an underwater demolition expert. Bill was a member of an elite group that were, the forerunners of the Navy SEALs. Subsequent afloat assignments included long deployments during the 1940s aboard heavy cruisers USS Los Angeles and USS Helena. Also during the Korea conflict Bill served aboard an attack transport, then a destroyer in Newport, Rhode Island. He was an Engineering Officer on the carrier Tarawa based at Quonset Naval Air Station and finally served as a Lieutenant Commander for 33 months aboard the guided missile cruiser Boston.

Upon his retirement from the Navy in 1965 he returned to college, earning his Bachelors and Masters degrees. In the early 1970's with degrees in hand and combined with his experience as a scuba diver, Bill, along with three other biologists founded the Marine Biology program at what has become Roger Williams University. This program is now one of the most popular areas of study at that institution. Bill also established the first two computer labs on the campus in the early 1980s, regularly training fellow faculty and students on their use. He retired from the University in 1988 but continued activity as Professor Emeritus of Biology until recent years

Bill was active in the local community, serving on the Newport Chamber of Commerce Yachting Committee, the Tall Ships 1976 Committee, as Chairman of the Trustees at the First Presbyterian Church, as Commander of the Newport Power Squadron and as the Commodore of Newport Yacht Club. Beyond his deep involvement with public service and the community, Bill will be remembered as a man committed to his word. If he said he was going to do something then that thing would surely be done. Military personnel, Portsmouth firemen and many others shook Bill's hand and said to him in one way or another; "Thank you for your service." This man's service to his country and his community was exceptional and exemplary.

He is survived by his longtime and dear companion, Joan Hopper of Portsmouth, his sister Lydia M. Johnson, daughter-in-law, Jeri Langdon, daughter, Jean Johnson Stuhlmann, daughter, Hilary Conley, son, Louis Guenther, daughter, Selby Minner, daughter-in-law, Mary Guenther, daughter Diane Langdon, nieces and nephews and many grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his sister, Jeanne Condie and sons, Van Thomas Langdon and Victor Michael Langdon.

A Memorial will be held on Saturday, June 10, 2017, at 2 p.m., at the United Congregational Church, 524 Valley Road, Middletown.

Memorial donations, in his memory, may be made to the Newport Hospital Foundation, 11 Friendship Street, Newport, RI 02840 or to the Aquidneck Island Land Trust, Spruce Acres, 790 Aquidneck Avenue, Middletown, RI 02842.