Star of Life Creator Leo R. Schwartz Dies



January 2004, MERGINET - Leo R. Schwartz, former chief of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Emergency Medical Services branch, has died at the age of 82. Perhaps most well-known for designing the EMS Star of Life, Schwartz was a lifelong member of the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians, which in 1981, named its annual EMS Service of the Year Award after him.

Schwartz was born on a farm near Sargent, Nebraska, on January 30, 1921. He graduated from high school in Merna, Nebraska, and attended Midland College, the University of Nebraska and Northwestern University. Before completing his education, he was called to active duty with the United States Marine Corps (USMC) for service during World War II. Schwartz returned from the war to earn his BA and MA from the University of Nebraska before serving his country again in the Korean War. Schwartz stayed on with the USMC in Okinawa, Sardinia and Turkey, as well as stateside, where he was involved in logistics planning, medical service planning and administration. He retired in 1968 at the rank of Lt. Colonel.

After his retirement from the military, Schwartz worked as a research coordinator for the George Washington University Medical Center. In 1969, he was hired by the Emergency Medical Services Division of the Department of Transportation Highway Safety Bureau (now the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration). Schwartz is credited for initiating the NHTSA/EMS program planning manual, developing the EMS Star of Life, and writing the training curricula for EMTs as well as specifications for modern ambulances and lifesaving equipment.

Schwartz was married for 57 years to Eleanor M. Schwartz, who preceded him in death last year. They had seven children, seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. A dedicated family man, Schwartz served as a Scoutmaster, a Little League baseball coach and a leader in the Knights of Columbus. He also was known in his neighborhood for being able to fix any household appliance.

Schwartz was buried in Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors.
In lieu of flowers, the family is asking that donations be made to: Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers POB 302 Maryknoll, NY 10545-0302 The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society POB 9031 Pittsfield, MA 01202