

## **Beverley R. “Bev” Lawler Advertising Federation of Greater Hampton Roads 1966 Silver Medal Award Honoree**



The 1966 Silver Medal Award honoree was Beverley R. Lawler, a man who helped shape business, municipal and charitable development in the region for more than 40 years. The award for achievement was presented by the Advertising Federation of Greater Hampton Roads.

A public relations pioneer who served on the boards of dozens of civic and business organizations, Lawler also became a confidant of municipal and education leaders.

A combat veteran of World War II, Lawler used his journalism and public relations experience from the Army to launch Virginia's first public relations firm, the Public Relations Institute, in 1954. He later organized an advertising affiliate, and the two firms eventually took the name Lawler Ballard Advertising Inc.

Future Silver Medal Award honoree Dan Ballard, who joined Lawler a year after Lawler launched the Public Relations Institute, became the firm's chief executive and principal owner several years later. He credited Lawler with pushing employees to become involved in community endeavors, especially charitable ones.

With its abundance of advertising and public relations accounts and a congenial climate, Lawler Ballard was a training ground for several people who started their own advertising and PR firms.

When Lawler sold the firm to Ballard in 1987, it had 150 employees and annual billing of \$55 million. It had a half-dozen offices elsewhere in the eastern United States in addition to its Norfolk headquarters. In 1991 the firm was sold to a Bethesda, Md., advertising agency.

After graduating from Holy Trinity High School in Norfolk in 1943, Lawler briefly attended an Army training program at the University of Florida. When the Army discontinued the program, Lawler ended up as a rifleman in Germany, where he was awarded a Bronze Star. He also served in the Philippines before leaving the Army with the rank of sergeant. On his discharge from active duty, Lawler was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Army Reserve.

Back in Norfolk, Lawler enrolled in the Norfolk division of the College of William and Mary, the predecessor of Old Dominion University. He transferred to the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, where he earned a bachelor's degree in journalism and wrote for student publications. On graduating, Lawler became a public information specialist for the Army Field Forces at Fort Monroe in Hampton.

Lawler's advertising and public relations work was recognized by several organizations, including the Old Dominion Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America.

Between 1984 and 1992, Lawler served on the Old Dominion University Board of Visitors. From 1987 until his death on April 27, 1999, he was a commissioner on the Norfolk Airport Authority board.

In 1989, he received the chapter's Thomas Jefferson Award for Excellence in Public Relations. In 1990, Lawler was inducted into the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame.