

Robert Emmett Cleary, 88, of Salem, MA, and formerly of Portland, CT, died Thursday, October 16, 2008 at the John Bertram House in Salem. He was preceded in death by his wife of 56 years, Barbara M. (Fitzgerald) Cleary.

He was born in Holyoke, MA, son of the late Dr. Robert Emmett, Sr. and Helen (Fitzgerald) Cleary. After graduating from Holyoke High School, he went on to earn both a B.S. and M.S. in Chemistry from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and a Ph.D. in Chemistry from the University of Notre Dame.

In between earning degrees, he and his wife were married Feb. 10, 1945 in Edgewood Arsenal, MD. He served as a 1st Lt. in the Pacific Theater for the U.S. Army, followed by a stint in the Army Reserves. Mr. and Mrs. Cleary had six children and settled in Portland, CT., where they lived for 40 years.

Mr. Cleary worked as a chemist, most notably for Pratt & Whitney Company in CT for 27 years of his career. However, his greatest achievements were the results of his enduring community work in the town of Portland, where he served on the Library Board, the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Education, as Chair of the Democratic Town Committee, and on the Board of Directors of the United Fund, among many other civic and charitable activities.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Cleary were known for their lively entertaining as well as their commitment to their community, to each other, and to the Boston Red Sox. Mr. Cleary was loved and admired for the ease with which he captured a crowd with a story, led a dinner table in a song, and made a friend of any stranger.

He is survived by six children and their spouses, Ellen and Philip Dube of Portsmouth, NH, James Thomas Cleary of Portland, CT, Robert Emmett Cleary III and Alison White, of Chelmsford, MA, Barbara Ann Cleary and David Hart, of Salem, MA, David and Candace Gray-Cleary of East Hampton, CT, and Michael Thomas and Theresa Cleary of Portland, CT.

He also leaves 10 grandchildren, Matthew Dube of Easthampton, MA, Kate Dube of Chicago, IL, Liza Dube of Portsmouth, N.H., Alison and Ryan Cleary of Middletown, CT., Brenna and Colin Cleary of Chelmsford, MA, Robert Laumann of the Netherlands, and Brendan and Desmond Cleary of Portland, CT, and one great-grandchild, Simon Weber of Chicago.

He was the brother of the late James Cleary who died at the Battle of the Bulge.