



## **Class of 2023 Inductee Biography Frank Lynn Whitbeck (1916 – 2002)**

### **SUMMARY:**

#### **Professional Contributions and Recognitions in the Workplace & Industry:**

- Founder of American Foundation Life Insurance Company (and its predecessor Pioneer Western Life Insurance Company) of Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1955
  - By the time of his retirement in 1979 American Foundation Life was doing business in 18 States and West Germany with over 5000 shareholders
- Founder of First American National Bank in North Little Rock
- Spokesman for the Arkansas Economic Expansion Study Commission, 1963
- Received an honorary JD from the University of Arkansas 50 years after he had passed the Arkansas bar exam before graduating from law school

#### **Community Service & Recognitions:**

- WWII Army Veteran
- Chairman of the Arkansas Public Building Authority, 1973
- Little Rock Water Commissioner from 1972-1980
- Chairman of numerous charitable causes including the United Way of Pulaski County, YMCA of Greater Little Rock, the Boy Scouts of America and many others
- Executive in Residence at the University of Arkansas, established the Whitbeck Beyer Chair of Financial Services, the first endowed chair of the school
- Established the Edward L. Whitbeck Award to the top graduating senior at UALR to honor his son who passed away in 1965
- Member of the Arkansas Bar Association and Foundation, 1991-92
- First Chairman of the Arkansas State Council on Economic Education
- UALR Distinguished Alumni Award 2001
- Past President of Rotary Club 99
- 33 degree Scottish Rites Mason, Scimitar Shrine
- Honorary Lifetime Fellow of the Harry S. Truman Library
- Member board of directors of American Council of Life Insurance, Washington, D.C.

### **FULL BIOGRAPHY:**

Whitbeck was founder of American Foundation Life Insurance Company and its predecessor Pioneer Western Life Insurance Company of Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1955.

His accomplishments in business, professional, civic and public life were numerous. He inspired many prominent Arkansans to achieve their best in business, professional and political life.

Frank married Beverly Robinson Butterfield on December 26, 1938 at St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral in Oklahoma City.

Whitbeck's success as a life insurance executive was contagious. He attracted local insurance professionals to join him in building a publicly owned life insurance company based in Little Rock. By the time of his retirement in 1979 American Foundation Life was doing business in 18 States and West Germany with over 5000 shareholders.

He was also a founder of First American National Bank in North Little Rock. Whitbeck's civic contributions were also very important to the growth of Arkansas.

In 1963 he was spokesman for the Arkansas Economic Expansion Study Commission, which defined the political agenda for Arkansas State Government for the modern era. Issues such as school district consolidation and incentives to attract new industry to Arkansas are still headline items 40 years later.

Whitbeck ran for governor of Arkansas in 1968 but in his words, "I was told by the electorate to stay in business." Nevertheless, he helped define and modernize Arkansas politics for years to come.

He later became a chairman of the Arkansas Public Building Authority in 1973, Little Rock Water Commissioner from 1972-1980, and chaired numerous charitable causes including the United Way of Pulaski County, YMCA of Greater Little Rock, the Boy Scouts of America and many others.

Whitbeck served in World War II becoming a "90-day wonder" going from an Army Private to a Second Lieutenant within 90 days of enlisting at Camp Robinson. He was assigned to transport troops to the front in Europe and the Pacific. He crossed the Atlantic Ocean over 30 times in wartime.

Following his insurance and civic careers Whitbeck became an Executive in Residence at the University of Arkansas. He established the Whitbeck Beyer Chair of Financial Services, the first endowed chair of the school.

He also established the Edward L. Whitbeck Award to the top graduating senior at UALR to honor his son who died in 1965.

In 2001 Whitbeck received the Distinguished Alumni Award from UALR.

He attended George Washington University in Washington DC and the University of Oklahoma as an undergraduate and the University of Arkansas School of Law but did not graduate from any of these institutions. Back in the day a student could qualify to attend law school before graduating, and could take the bar exam before graduating law school. The Honorary JD from the U of A was a welcomed tribute 50 years after he had passed the Arkansas bar exam.

His civic activities also included First Chairman of the Arkansas State Council on Economic Education.

Past President of Rotary Club 99, 1991-92, member of the Arkansas Bar Association and Foundation, 33 degree Scottish Rites Mason, Scimitar Shrine, Honorary Lifetime Fellow of the Harry S. Truman Library, board of directors of American Council of Life Insurance, Washington, D.C., Life Insurance Management and Research Association, Hartford, Connecticut.

St. Paul's Cathedral in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, where he married Beverly Robinson Butterfield married on December 26, 1938, was heavily damaged by the Murray Federal Building bombing and Frank and Beverly helped lead a campaign to restore the Cathedral to its original grace.

An exemplary Episcopalian, Whitbeck served as Senior Warden of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral the time the Cathedral School of Little Rock was started.

A quote from his son Frank Butterfield Whitbeck: "It should also be noted that my father was an optimist about almost every endeavor in life. As a member of "the greatest generation" he possessed a unique quality of not letting obstacles deter him from accomplishing a worthy goal. He also believed that there was a fundamental good quality in every person no matter what their circumstance in life. In the end he was a great motivator and employer of many who admired his optimistic view that all problems had solutions. Even my late father-in-law, Sam Rowland, of the Rector, Means and Rowland insurance agency, said " Frank Whitbeck is the smartest man I ever met. "