

John Edward Donelan... founder of Donelan's Supermarkets; WWII vet; 87

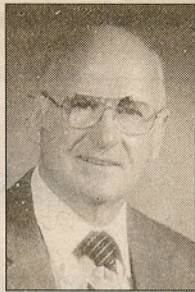
WESTFORD — John Edward Donelan, 87, a former Littleton resident who founded a local supermarket chain in town and was a World War II veteran, died Thursday, Oct. 6, at the Westford House nursing home. He was the husband of Mary Donelan, to whom he was married for 63 years.

He was born in Bridgeport, Conn., June 1, 1918, the oldest of 11 children. He graduated from St. Bernard's High School in Fitchburg.

Mr. Donelan served in the Army from 1941 to 1945. A World War II veteran, Mr. Donelan was a master sergeant and warrant officer in the 20th Armored Division. His tour of duty took him through Germany, France, and Austria, and his division was the first to liberate the concentration camp in Dachau, and provide supplies to the survivors.

In 1948, Mr. Donelan and his wife, Mary moved from Fitchburg to Littleton. After working in his father's First National in Fitchburg for several years.

Mr. Donelan decided to launch his own food store that would differ dramatically from the local "mom and pop" corner markets that were typical in the years following World War II. He founded Donelan's Supermarkets, opening the first store on the Littleton Common in 1948. Mr. Donelan was an innovator in the grocery business, pioneering the concept of self-serve groceries and perishable foods all in one store. Mr. Donelan grew



the company to four locations, retiring in 1984. The company now has six locations and employs over 300 people.

He enjoyed 20 years of retirement along with his wife, Mary, residing in Hebron, N.H., and Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Mr. Donelan was active in St. Anne's Parish in Littleton, and was an integral part in the construction of the church. He served as the co-chair of the Building Committee of St. Anne's Parish and as past president of the Holy Name Society. He was also a member of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

He will be remembered by family members as a devoted husband, father and family man.

Besides his wife, he is survived by two sons and a daughter-in-law, John K. and Martha Donelan of Acton, and Joseph R. Donelan and companion, Ronni Goldsmith, MD of Concord, Mass.; two daughters and sons-in-law, Mary and Edward Seidl of Hampton, N.H., and Barbara and David Williams of Ossining, N.Y.; a brother and sister-in-law, Patrick and Barbara Donelan of Fitchburg; five sisters and four brothers-in-law, Anne and Arthur Trudel of Fitchburg, Sally and John Murphy of Aurora, Col., Francis and Roy Barr of Beaver, Pa., Kay Humphries of Fitchburg, and Terry and Thomas Mooney of Mardela Springs, Md.; six grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; and a great-great-grandchild.

DONELAN — Of Littleton, John E. Donelan, Oct. 6. Funeral from the Badger Funeral Home, 347 King St., Littleton on Tuesday at 9 a.m. with a Mass of Christian Burial at St. Anne's Church, King St., Littleton at 10 a.m. Visiting Hours Monday 2-4 and 7-9 p.m. Burial at Westlawn Cemetery, Littleton. Contributions may be made in his memory to your local American Heart Assn., American Cancer Association or Alzheimer's Assn.

Boston Globe
Saturday, October 8, 2005

DONELAN, John E. — Of Littleton, Oct. 6. Husband of Mary (McCann) of Acton. Father of Mary K. and her husband Edward Seidl of Hampton, N.H., John K. and his wife Martha Donelan of Acton, Barbara and her husband David Williams of Ossining, N.Y. and Joseph R. and his companion Ronni Goldsmith M.D. of Concord. Brother of Patrick and his wife Barbara Donelan of Fitchburg, Ann and her husband Arthur Trudel of Fitchburg, Sally and her husband John Murphy of Aurora, CO, Francis and her husband Roy Barr of Beaver, PA, Kay Humphries of Fitchburg and Terry and her husband Thomas of Mardella Springs, MD. Also survived by 6 grandchildren, 4 great grandchildren and 1 great grandchild. Funeral from the Badger Funeral Home, 347 King St. LITTLETON on Tuesday at 9 a.m. with a Mass of Christian Burial at St. Anne's Church, King St. Littleton at 10 a.m. Visiting Hours Monday 2-4 and 7-9 p.m. Burial at Westlawn Cemetery, Littleton. Contributions may be made in his memory to your local American Heart Assn, American Cancer Association or Alzheimer's Assn.