

Ralph E. Leader

Major General

U.S. Air Force (Ret.)

Business Executive

Class of 1939



In 1939 Ralph Leader's classmates chose him as the "boy with the best disposition." They also noted that he would likely succeed, that he was admired by his classmates, that he possessed athletic prowess, and that he exhibited leadership qualities.

While at Needham High School, Ralph participated in a variety of activities. He was Class Vice-President for three years; a Home Room Officer for three years; a member of Student Council for three years; and on the Sophomore Ring Committee, the Sophomore Dance Committee, the Junior and Senior Prom Committees. A member of the Gym Team for three years, he also found time to participate in Football (three years), basketball (one year), Track (one year), and baseball (two years).

General Leader holds a Business and Engineering Administration degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Following graduation from MIT, General Leader, who had been a member of the Student Reserve Officers Training Corps while in college, enrolled in Officers Candidate School. After OCS and primary, basic and advanced pilot training, General Leader received his wings (1944) and was assigned to duty as a fighter pilot in Siam (Thailand) and China. In 1946 General Leader joined the Massachusetts Air

National Guard, serving as fighter pilot, Flight Commander, and Wing Flying Safety Officer and rising from the rank of Captain to Lieutenant-Colonel. During this time he was instrumental in the reactivation of the 101st Fighter Squadron of the Massachusetts Air National Guard. In 1961-62 his unit was recalled to active duty during the Berlin Crisis and deployed to France where he served as Deputy Director of Wing Operations. After returning to the United States, he served as a Group Commander, a Wing Commander, Chief of Staff, and, in 1976, Commander Massachusetts Air National Guard. In 1977 he was promoted to Major General. General Leader is a recipient of the Air Force Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, and the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal. He serves on the Air Reserve Forces Policy Committee and the National Research Council Food Service Committee.

General Leader has held a variety of positions of responsibility in the business world. He has been a manager of market research, a sales engineer, a product manager, a sales promotion manager, a manufacturing and engineering manager, a new products manager, a production and inventory planning and control manager, and a vice-president and general manager. While a sales engineer at Raytheon, he was involved with the first microwave cooking effort. He has also been a management consultant.

General Leader was an architect of the recently formed Needham Education Foundation which is currently raising funds to provide enrichment programs for Needham students. He currently serves as president of the foundation.