

# John Luetkemeyer, 88, state treasurer, CEO of Equitable Trust and civic leader

By FRED RASMUSSEN  
SUN STAFF

John A. Luetkemeyer Sr., former state treasurer, chief executive officer of Equitable Trust Co. and civic leader, died Thursday of heart failure at his Roland Park Place residence. He was 88.

The longtime Homeland resident, who had resided at the Roland Park retirement community since 1990, was born in Cleveland and graduated from the Hill School in Pottstown, Pa.

"He was a banker's banker," H. Grant Hathaway, former chairman and chief executive officer of Equitable Bank, which later merged with Maryland National Bank, said Friday.

"John rose through the ranks to become one of Baltimore's outstanding bankers. He was a people person who could relate to both his employees and customers and thus developed a very loyal customer following for the bank," he said.

Mr. Hathaway said Mr. Luetkemeyer did everything with gusto and had a lifelong enthusiasm for Equitable Bank.

Mr. Luetkemeyer earned his bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1933 and attended Harvard Law School for one year before moving to Baltimore, where he began his 42-year banking career as a \$14-a-week runner at Equitable Trust Co.

Mr. Luetkemeyer advanced to teller and proof clerk and helped organize the bank's consumer credit department, the first at a commercial bank in Baltimore. Home-improvement and automobile loans now are regularly offered to the public by commercial banks, but when Mr. Luetkemeyer began his career, banks looked to large companies and investors for business.



**John A. Luetkemeyer Sr.** twice received the Purple Heart and was awarded the Bronze Star for gallantry in action during World War II.

Former Equitable Bank Chairman Robert G. Merrick, who died in 1986, credited Mr. Luetkemeyer, whom he hired, with pioneering consumer banking and branch banks in Baltimore.

"I was for branches, but not quite as aggressively as he was. He wasn't responsible for getting us into it, but he was responsible for pushing it," Mr. Merrick said in a 1975 interview in *The Sun*.

The outbreak of World War II interrupted Mr. Luetkemeyer's career, and he joined the Marines in 1942, becoming a bomb-disposal expert. He twice received the Purple Heart, for bullet wounds in the Philippines and for shrapnel injuries in Malaya. In Malaya, he was awarded the Bronze Star for gallantry in action. He was discharged as a major in 1945 and returned to Equitable. That year he was named vice president.

Three years later he was made a bank director. In 1960 he was named executive vice president and a year later, president. He became chairman of the board in 1967 and retired as chairman of Equitable Bancorporation in 1975. He remained as a director and consultant to the bank until 1979.

In 1961, Gov. J. Millard Tawes appointed him to the Banking Board of Maryland. The General Assembly elected him state treasurer in 1963, and he was returned to the post every four years, until he retired in 1973. As state treasurer, Mr. Luetkemeyer, a Democrat, sat with the governor and comptroller on the powerful Board of Public Works.

Despite the concerns of editorial writers who questioned whether he could resist partisanship in executing his duties as state treasurer, Mr. Luetkemeyer proved to be impartial.

In 1967, he survived an attempt by the late Gov. Spiro T. Agnew to replace him. His health forced him to resign in 1973, when he had a heart attack.

Mr. Luetkemeyer's work for his city and state included serving on the city Board of Commissioners of Finance from 1959 to 1968 and as a member of the advisory committee of the Maryland Port Authority, the Metropolitan Transit Authority and the Maryland Industrial Development Financing Authority.

He also served as president of the Boy Scouts of America, Family and Children's Society of Maryland, American Cancer Society, Greater Baltimore Committee and Red Cross. In addition, he served as chairman of the board at the Sheppard Pratt Hospital and Church Home and Hospital. He served for many years on the Calvert School and Goucher College boards of trustees.

He served as the first head of the American Industrial Financing Agency and was a regent of the University of Maryland and president of the Rollins-Luetkemeyer Foundation.

He was no less active in business, having served on the boards of Savings Bank of Baltimore; Park's Sausage Co.; National Life of Tennessee; American Capital Bond Funds; Baltimore Gas and Electric Co.; Baltimore Aircoil Co.; Ramsay, Scarlett and Co. Inc.; American General Insurance Co.; Maryland Casualty Co.; and Johnson Motor Lines.

One of the things he was most proud of was helping minority business people and working with the Baltimore Council for Equal Business Opportunity.

While other banks were hesitant about underwriting loans for minority businesses in the late 1960s, Mr. Luetkemeyer embraced the idea.

"I did an awful lot in that area [assisting minority businesses] because I thought it should be done. I got a tremendous amount of human satisfaction out of those

efforts," he told *The Sun* in a 1978 interview.

Walter Sondheim Jr., a former Baltimore department store executive who is senior adviser to the Greater Baltimore Committee, said, "He was a man of enormous integrity and activity."

Mr. Sondheim described him as being a "very modest person in his business dealings with people."

"John was not only highly respected by his colleagues in banking but by the entire community. He was extremely useful. He provided helpful and sane advice to so many community activities."

For years, Mr. Luetkemeyer kept in shape by playing tennis and golf.

He was a member of the Bachelors Cotillon and the Harvard, Elkridge and Maryland clubs.

He was a member of Brown Memorial Woodbrook Presbyterian Church, 6200 N. Charles St., where a memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. Tuesday.

Mr. Luetkemeyer is survived by his wife of 59 years, the former Anne McLanahan; a son, John A. Luetkemeyer Jr. of Baltimore; two daughters, Anne Luetkemeyer Stone of Baltimore and Jean Scott Prema of Colerain, Mass.; and five grandchildren.