RHIAN, Elliot

Elliot Rhian, ocean engineer, founder of Thermex Inc., dies

PROVIDENCE — Elliot Rhian, 71, of 15 Parkside Drive, the founder of the insulation and coatings firm Thermex Inc., retiring in 1987, died yesterday at home. He was the husband of Barbara (Goldis) Rhian.

Born in Providence, a son of the late Morris and Eleanor Rhian, he lived in Providence and New York, returning to Providence in 1974.

A veteran of the Army Signal Corps, he participated in the Normandy Invasion in June of 1944, and served in France, Belgium and Germany.

He was a 1951 magna cum laude graduate of Brown University. In 1954 he received his master's degree in physics from Penn State University. While at Penn State, he received an appointment to the National Academy of Sciences, researching undersea systems for the Navy. He became an assistant professor of marine science at the University of Miami Marine Laboratory, investigating the nature of undersea sound.

In 1960, he was recruited by Ford Motor Co.'s Philco Division in Philadelphia to work on undersea missile locations and tracking systems. He was involved in the development of Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicles following the sinking of the submarine Thresher. He managed the installation of the first undersea nuclear detection system off the coast of California for the enforcement of the first Nuclear Test Ban Treaty with the Soviets.

In 1974, he founded Thermex Inc., which specialized in insulation and coatings for energy savings. He was involved in the world's largest desalination system, at the time, in the conversion of sea water to fresh water at the U.S. Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He carried out several energy-saving programs throughout New England during the 1970s, and the fire protection program on one of the world's largest offshore oil-drilling platforms. He conducted asbestos abatement programs in public and private facilities.

A frequent lecturer at the Franklin Institute and the Philadelphia Engineers Club in the area of oceanography and ocean engineering, he published numerous articles in professional and Naval journals.

Besides his wife he leaves a son, Steven Rhian of Nashville, Tenn.; a daughter, Diana Thibault of Houston, Texas; a brother, Julius Rhian of Lakeland, Fla.; a sister, Barbara Rhian of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; and a grandson.

The funeral will be held tomorrow at 11 a.m. at Mount Sinai Memorial Chapel, 825 Hope St., Providence. Burial will be in Sharon Memorial Park, Sharon, Mass.

PJ-B 7-30-1996

RHIAN, Elliot

July 29, 1996. Beloved husband of Barbara (Goldis) Rhian. Residence 15 Parkside Dr., Providence. Dear father of Diana Thibault, Houston, TX, and Steven Rhian, Nashville, TN. Dear brother of Barbara Rhian, Ft. Lauderdale, FL. and Julius Rhian, Lakeland, FL. Devoted grandfather of Aaron. Funeral service 11:00 a.m. Wednesday at MOUNT SINAI MEMORIAL CHAPEL, 825 Hope at 4th Sts. Relatives and friends are invited. In lieu of flowers contributions may be made to American Cancer Society. Memorial Observance at his late residence Wednesday 7-9 p.m.; Thursday 2-4, 7-9.