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## Clarence Greene, 75, Florida Tile

By [Matthew Pleasant](#)  
The Ledger

LAKELAND -- Mr. Clarence Edward Greene's charismatic personality allowed him to have an international sales career.

Mr. Greene died of cardiac arrest Friday (March 4, 2005) at Lakeland Regional Medical Center. He was 75.

"It was very easy for people to look up to him as a wise person," his son, Dick Greene of Lakeland, said. "He could sell anything to anybody."

Recognizing his sales talent, one of the first companies Mr. Greene worked for offered him a job in Venezuela. At 32, he packed his family up and moved to South America. Four years later, he would move to Guatemala to help organize a factory for Blue Bird Body Co., a school bus manufacturer.

"There was no plan to live in Lakeland," his son said, but after making a contact with Jimmy Sikes, owner of Sikes Tile, Mr. Greene retired from Blue Bird Body Co. as vice president. He moved to Lakeland in 1980 and became an export manager for Sikes Tile, later known as Florida Tile.

With the business relations he had from Florida Tile, Mr. Greene opened Florida Trading Corp. with his wife in 1982. The prospering company still operates today. In the early 1990s, Dick Greene, formerly of Miami, and Mr. Greene's daughter, Jo Ellen Greene, formerly of Boston, left their respective cities to work with their father.

"People were transfixed by him," his son remembered. He said his father was a fixture in the business community who was looked to for sage advice. "He was a guy they went to when they needed advice or a partner in a venture."

Mr. Greene never officially retired and was scheduled for a business trip to South America this week.

"He was more active than me. He always said 'The day I retire is the day I die'," his son remembered. "Truer words were never spoken."

He was a veteran of the U.S. Army, serving in the Korean War. He was a member of Lone Palm Golf Club and Grasslands. He was a member of First United Methodist Church, Lakeland.

Mr. Greene is survived by his wife, Phyllis J. Greene; son, Dick Greene, Lakeland; daughter, Jo Ellen Greene, Lakeland; sister, Margaret Brand, Commerce, Ga.; four grandchildren.

Services will be at 10 a.m. Wednesday at First United Methodist Church, Lakeland.

Memorials may be made to Lighthouse Ministries, 117 E. Magnolia St., Lakeland, FL 33801.

Heath Funeral Chapel, Lakeland.

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