



Henri Landwirth

Henri Landwirth was born March 7, 1927 in Antwerp, Belgium.

Between the ages of 13 to 18, Henri was shuffled between Nazi death camps and labor camps, from Auschwitz, Matthausen, Gusen I, Gusen II, and Ostrowitz. At the end of the war, he and four other prisoners were marched into the woods to be shot, but at the last minute a Nazi soldier decided to spare his life, and told them to run when the shots were heard.

“It is only a miracle that I am alive today,” says Landwirth. When the war ended, Henri left his native Belgium, working his way over on a freight ship to the United States, arriving with just \$20 in his pocket. Soon after he settled in New York, he received a letter from the President of the United States. At first, Henri believed the President was welcoming him to America. It was actually a draft notice.

After serving in the United States Army and learning English, Landwirth used his G.I. benefits to take a course in hotel management and landed a position in a New York City hotel, taking the opportunity to be taught every job in the hotel.

Henri Landwirth moved to Florida in 1954, and soon managed the 100-room Starlight Motel in Cocoa Beach, near Cape Canaveral. Space exploration was in its early days, and the original Mercury Seven astronauts made the Starlight Motel their temporary residence. It was during this time that Henri developed friendships with the astronauts, as well as the legendary newsman, Walter Cronkite, that continue today.

Landwirth, now retired, had an innovative and tremendous career in the hotel industry for over 50 years. His career spanned the wide spectrum of positions from bellboy to management to ownership of many successful Central Florida hotels. For the last 20 years, he has devoted himself to improving the lives of those in need.

Foundations Founded by Henri Landwirth

1984 – Astronaut Scholarship Foundation

This foundation formed by the six surviving members of the original Mercury Seven Astronauts, Betty Grissom, widow of the seventh, Virgil (Gus) Grissom, William Douglass, M.D., the Project Mercury flight surgeon and Henri Landwirth. Currently, more than 70 astronauts from the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab, and Shuttle programs are helping by providing scholarships for college students who exhibit motivation, imagination, and exceptional performance in the science or engineering field of their major. To date, the foundation has awarded more than \$2.3 million in scholarships to 211 deserving students.

1978- Fanny Landwirth Foundation

A private family foundation named in honor of Henri's mother. This foundation was started to encourage and promote philanthropy for future generations of the Landwirth family. To date, this foundation has provided seed money for many successful and currently active charitable organizations, such as Give Kids The World, Dignity-U-Wear, Memories of Love, A Gift For Teaching, Art with a Heart for Children, and provided funds to build a senior citizen center and children's school in Orlando, FL.

1986- Give Kids The World

Henri founded this non-profit resort to provide children with life-threatening illnesses and their families with a week-long vacation to Central Florida and its famous theme parks and attractions, at no cost to the family. The organization has grown to a 70 acre village, located in Kissimmee, FL, and can accommodate 7,000 families each year. To date, they have served over 76,000 families from all 50 states and over 50 countries.

2000- Dignity-U-Wear

After moving to Jacksonville, FL, thinking he would retire, Henri founded Dignity-U-Wear, answering the need to supply brand new clothing, underwear and essentials to families who are homeless, battered, abused and left behind. To date, Dignity-U-Wear has distributed clothing valued at over \$32 million to families in 30 states.

2005- Memories of Love

In August 2005, Henri and good friend, Mel Gottlieb, co-founded this organization to create joyful, lasting memories for a terminally-ill parent and their children when they experience a cost-free, fun-filled vacation to Orlando and that area's best loved theme parks. 13 area Holiday Inn Resorts provide the accommodations. Financial support for travel and incidentals is supplied by Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Florida and meals are provided by many corporate industry partners.

Honors and Awards

1988- Caring Institute's- One of the 12 Most Caring Individuals in America.

1989- Florida Hotel & Motel Association's Presidents Award

Creative Thinking National Recognition Award

Member of the National Sales Hall of Fame

Outstanding Philanthropists Award

1994- Parents Magazine- Humanitarian of the Year

Orlando Sentinel- Floridian of the Year

1997- Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters- University of Cincinnati

2002- Carried the Olympic Torch through Orlando for the 2002 Winter Games

2003- Ellis Island Medal of Honor

Jimmy and Rosiland Carter Award for Humanitarian Contributions to Health of Humankind

Children's Home Society of Florida- R. David Thomas Child Advocate of the Year