

# [ICFA Honors Family Business Leaders](#)

July 8, 2019 - HIGH POINT, N.C. - The International Casual Furnishings Association (ICFA) announces Gwen and Jack Raseman and Allen E. Gant Jr., are the recipients of its 2019 Lifetime Achievement Awards.

“Family businesses are the heart of the casual home furnishings industry,” said ICFA Executive Director Jackie Hirschhaut. “ICFA’s 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award recipients exemplify the resilience, integrity and unique partnerships that characterize the successful family ventures in our industry.”

Jack and Gwen Raseman, founders of Deck-N-Den Limited in Kalamazoo, Michigan, are this year’s retail recipients, while Allen E. Gant Jr., chairman of Glen Raven, is the manufacturing recipient.



Gwen & Jack Raseman

Jack and Gwen met in Germany during the Korean War while she was performing with a British singing trio and he was stationed with the U.S. Air Force. They married on St. Patrick’s Day in 1956. The couple later settled in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where Jack went to work for his father’s business, a moving and storage company called National Storage. They soon added National Furniture to the operation and, when Jack’s brother took over the moving and storage business in 1974, Jack and Gwen changed the name of the furniture operation to Deck-N-Den Limited. Five years later they took home their first Apollo Award for retail excellence. They earned another in 1981 and opened a new store in 1984.

In the meantime, the couple raised four children in their family business. Each child was active in the enterprise as they grew up, although only one - Donn, now a sales representative for Tropitone and Seaside Casual - wound up with a career in the casual furniture industry. Jack and Gwen were both active in what was then the National Association of Casual Furniture Retailers, or NACFR. Jack served as president in 1982-83, and Gwen served as president in 1988. Among their proudest accomplishments during this time was helping to launch winter retail conferences to build professionalism among outdoor and casual furniture entrepreneurs.

In 1997, Jack and Gwen retired and closed the store that supported their family for 25 years. They now live on Gull Lake in Michigan, where they enjoy their five grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



Allen E. Gant, Jr.

Many industry veterans recognize Allen E. Gant Jr., long-time CEO of Glen Raven, Inc., the global provider of performance fabrics with 40 factories and over 3,000 employees in 17 countries on six continents. But not as many are familiar with the family history behind Glen Raven.

The company was founded in Burlington, North Carolina, in 1880 by Gant's grandfather, John Q. Gant, as an apparel business. It became Glen Raven Cotton Mills in 1902. Gant's father, Allen E. Gant Sr., invented pantyhose in 1953 and launched Sunbrella performance fabrics in 1960.

Gant Jr. "formally" joined Glen Raven in 1971 in the industrial engineering department, although he had been doing odd jobs around the company since age 16. He served in a number of positions, adding steadily to his responsibilities until being named president and CEO in 1996. During his leadership, Gant Jr. tackled pressures from overseas competition that threatened many U.S. manufacturers. He transformed Glen Raven from a company focused primarily on apparel into one that created innovative performance fabrics for outdoor and indoor furnishings, the marine and shade markets, plus the automotive industry. He also guided two major restructurings of the company and led several acquisitions and mergers. He is known for fueling "perpetual transformation."

Upon his induction to the American Home Furnishings Hall of Fame in 2018, Gant Jr. said he was driven by Glen Raven's corporate motto: "Let endless possibilities begin."

An avid business and industry volunteer, Gant Jr. served on President George W. Bush's Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations, the American Manufacturing Trade Action Coalition, TextilePAC and the National Council of Textile Organizations. He is passionate about supporting public education, economic development and leadership initiatives, and his honors include the UNC Kenan-Flagler Global Leadership Award, the Dale Carnegie Leadership Award, and the 2018 Award for Distinguished Citizenship presented by the North Carolina Chamber.

The Rasemans and Gant Jr. will be honored at the ICFA Awards Gala on September 11 at the Hilton Chicago. Tickets for ICFA members can be ordered from the ICFA website, <http://www.ahfa.us/icfa-gala-res-2019/>, for \$85 per person or \$800 for a table of 10. Tickets for non-members are \$110 each and \$1,100 for a table of 10. For the third year, a portion of the ticket sales will be donated to City of Hope, ICFA's philanthropic interest.