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By STUART LAVIETES

Robert R. Wechsler, an advertising executive who had a hand in the creation and continuing success of one of the most popular promotional campaigns ever, the Miss Rheingold Contest, died on June 15 in Rye Brook, N.Y. He was 90 and lived in Greenwich, Conn.

Mr. Wechsler was a 26-year-old salesman when he called on Phillip Liebmann, the president of Liebmann Brewery and maker of Rheingold Beer, to show him samples of a new printing process his company had developed. Some of the samples featured pictures of Jinx Falkenburg, a Chilean-born actress and tennis player.

"The printing process was revolutionary, but the girl was spectacular," Mr. Liebmann later recalled, according to the book "From Beer to Eternity," by Will Anderson.

"Mr. Liebmann promptly signed up Miss Falkenburg and declared her Miss Rheingold. He also hired Mr. Wechsler's company, Elinson Freeman, to help promote her as the face of Rheingold Beer.

The following year, Mr. Liebmann decided to open the selection of Miss Rheingold 1942 to the public. To drum up interest in the vote, Mr. Wechsler put up pennants with the portraits of the six contestants and installed ballot boxes in bars, restaurants and stores throughout the New



York area.

Beer drinkers — and their spouses, children, friends and relatives — flocked to the polls. By 1952, the contest was drawing about 25 million votes, although the "one man, one vote" rule was not strictly adhered to.

The contest propelled Rheingold, which had been ranked sixth in the New York market, to No. 1. The election of Miss Rheingold continued, promoted all along by Elinson Freeman, until 1964; the brewery closed in 1976.

Mr. Wechsler retired from Elinson Freeman in 1999. In his 63-year ca-



Robert R. Wechsler in an undated photo, and Miss Rheingold 1952.

reer, he helped introduce many of the devices stores use to attract the attention of shoppers, including motorized rotating display cases and large vinyl posters pasted flat onto store floors.

Robert Rogers Wechsler was born in Manhattan on Jan. 24, 1913. He graduated from Yale in 1935 and served in the Navy from 1942 to 1945. He is survived by his wife, Doris; three daughters, Patricia Forest of Los Angeles, Margaret Ann Warwick of Greenwich and Diane Hope Herschleb of Portland, Ore.; 10 grandchildren; and 9 great-grandchildren.