



Paul Leake Bernhardt

June 6, 1924 - April 5, 2012

Paul Leake Bernhardt, 87, downtown merchant and former mayor of Salisbury, died Thursday night, April 5, 2012, at Rowan Regional Medical Center. The only child of the late Leake Augustus and Eva Rebecca Nicholas Bernhardt, he was born June 6, 1924, in the family home on West Bank Street. Bernhardt was educated in the public schools of Salisbury, graduated from Boyden High School in 1942 and attended Georgia Military Academy. During World War II, he served in the U.S. Army Air Forces in the European Theatre, and received a medal with five Battle Stars, and a Presidential Unit Citation with two Oak Leaf Clusters. Following the war, he graduated from Catawba College. Bernhardt became the fourth generation to enter the family hardware business. Innovative and talented, he won many window-decorating contests sponsored by suppliers, and was the recipient of trips and cars for his efforts. In 1960, he was recognized as the National Hardware Retailer of the Year.

His company, Bernhardt Hardware, was a downtown Salisbury fixture, and was a destination for shopping or a social visit. Dubbed the "Sage of Main Street," Bernhardt was frequently called upon for his advice on business, personal and political matters and could answer any questions about olden times in Salisbury. He was great storyteller and was frequently called upon to give programs. A history buff, his special interests were the Gold Hill mining operations and the Sparks Circus that wintered in Salisbury for many years. His well-known collection of circus memorabilia is extensive. It will be preserved in the Edith Clark History Room of the Rowan Public Library.

Always active in civic affairs, he served on the board of directors of Northwestern Bank, First Union Bank, Junior Chamber of Commerce, Salisbury Community Foundation, Margaret C. Woodson Foundation, and the Salvation Army. He was elected 12 years to the Salisbury City Council; he became mayor in 1967 and served for four years.

He received lifetime service awards from the Association of Retarded Citizens (ARC) and Salvation Army, and a lifetime achievement award from the Merchants' Association; was recognized as Man of the Year by the local organizations of National Conference of Christians and Jews, Lion's Club, Jr. Chamber of Commerce, and as Director of the Year by

Downtown Salisbury, Inc.; was honored as a Rotary Paul Harris Fellow, as Grand Marshal of the 1991 Christmas Parade, and with the State's prestigious Order of the Long Leaf Pine for extraordinary service to North Carolina. He lifetime of devotion and service to the community was highlighted at the Mayor's Spirit Luncheon in 2009, where he was recognized for his leadership in establishing peaceful and innovative solutions during integration.

He was a member of the Rotary Club. A lifelong member of St. John's Lutheran Church, he served on the church council and the executive committee.

Known as a caring and compassionate person, Bernhardt helped many people during difficult times, and was also a friend to stray animals. People even left animals at the hardware store knowing that Bernhardt would either adopt them or find a home for them. Bernhardt was married to Naomi Helen Rink for 58 years before she met an untimely death in a car accident on November 22, 2010. He was a devoted father to his children, Paul Leake

"P. B." Bernhardt, Jr., and Eva Bernhardt Bingham. He is also survived by his son-in-law, David Y. Bingham.

Visitation: Visitation will be Monday, April 9, from 6 until 8 o'clock at Summersett Funeral Home.

Services: Funeral service will be late Tuesday afternoon, April 10, at 5 o'clock at St. John's

Lutheran Church with the Rev. Rhodes Woolly officiating. Burial will be Wednesday, April 11, at 11 o'clock in the Bernhardt family plot at Chestnut Hill Cemetery. The Reverend David Nelson will officiate. Memorials: Faithful Friends Animal Sanctuary (FFAS), 220 Grace Church Road, Salisbury, N. C. 28147 or the donor's choice.

Tribute Wall



“ OUR HEARTS ARE WITH YOU IN THIS TIME OF LOSS.##imported-begin##HERMAN FINK AND BILLIE BRADSHAW##imported-end##

April 10, 2012 at 04:42 PM



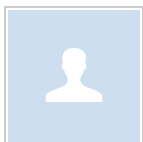
“ To the Paul Bernhardt Family,
I wanted to pass along my sincere condolences and let you know I am thinking of you as you mourn the loss of your father, Paul. He will be greatly missed by many people.
Sincerely,
Addie Ketner##imported-begin##Addie Ketner##imported-end##

April 10, 2012 at 03:47 PM



“ David and Eva sorry for your loss i have been thinking about your family and hope everything is ok if i can do anything please let me know
Love Ya
Jamie##imported-begin##Jamie Russell##imported-end##

April 08, 2012 at 12:09 AM



“ PAUL WAS A WOUNDERFUL FRIEND TO US .WE WILL MISS HIM ALOT.YOUR FAMILY WILL BE IN OUR PRAYERS.RICKS BBQ AND GRILL AND STARLA,RICK,CARSON FOSTER##imported-begin##RICKS BBQ AND GRILL##imported-end##

April 07, 2012 at 10:30 PM