



Bernard Leslie Benson, Sr.

April 21, 1940 - January 21, 2024

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Bernie Benson on January 21, 2024, at the age of 83. He was surrounded by family in his final days. Bernie realized nearly every accomplishment that he set his mind to, in his business as well as his personal life, including assuming a strong patriarchal role in his family.

Growing up without a great deal of means in Cresco, Iowa, Bernie was determined that he see the world despite the odds. As a young boy, he was fascinated by the life outside Iowa, and longed to travel the world. In 1958, he enlisted in United States Navy, stationed in San Diego where he would then go on to sail to many Asian countries. Throughout the remainder of his life, he would travel to all corners of the world visiting well over 100 countries, with a long bucket list still active.

After four years in the military, Bernie ended up at the University of MN and graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree. It is then he became a lifelong Gopher fan and ultimately a member of the Golden Dunkers. Bernie loved to go to football games but never missed a basketball game in over five decades.

Bernie had a long successful career with Merrill Lynch in Minneapolis for 37 years. During his tenure he received many accolades and was highly

regarded by the entire industry. He became one of the most prominent Financial Planners nationwide and Chairman of Merrill Advisory Council in New York. He was featured in the original book "Winners Circle" that highlighted the top financial advisors of Wall Street. While he appreciated the notoriety that came with his success, his client's financial security was his driving principle and top priority for his continuing efforts.

Along with his family, his personal life was filled enjoying tennis, golf, fishing, and snowmobiling. He spent much time at his home in Brainerd, MN on Gull Lake and later in life in Naples, Florida. He was also a good friend to many, charitable, and strongly advocated for creating opportunity for the less fortunate. He spent years as an active member in the Big Brother program, created scholarships for kids in Cresco, Iowa and started a scholarship foundation at the University of West Indies in Jamaica where he was recognized as the humanitarian of the year.

Jamaica was the place he felt the most relaxed and it was very dear to his heart. Over the years, he started a number of businesses there, and offered direct support to many, all which contributed to enriching the local community. After retirement from Merrill Lynch, he worked for the American Refugee Committee, and provided mentor-ship to underprivileged school kids in Immokalee, Florida. He will be sorely missed by all.

Bernie is survived by loving wife, Ramona; brother Gordon (Judy) Benson; daughter Christina (Dustin) Boyd; son Bernie Jr. (Lucy) Benson; grandchildren Hunter Boyd, Olivia Boyd, and Bernie 'Ben' Benson III; step-children Troy (Elizabeth) Bracher; Paige (Billy) Wingerd; Jason Carlson and extended grandchildren Max Wingerd, Noah Wingerd, Billy Wingerd, Maggie Carlson, Leo Carlson, Jack Bracher, Christian Bracher, George Bracher, Tanner Bracher and many other extended family and friends.

There will be a Celebration of Life gathering to Honor Bernie
Saturday, February 3rd, 1pm - 4pm* Lafayette Club
2800 Northview Rd
Minnetonka Beach, MN 55391

*This will be an open house with a short program for remembrances at 2pm

In lieu of flowers, the family asks to please consider a donation to one of the following charities:

Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation
230 East Ohio St. #500
Chicago, IL 60611

Children's Hospital Foundation
2525 Chicago Ave.
Minneapolis, MN 55404

Previous Events

Memorial Gathering

FEB 3. 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

Lafayette Club
2800 Northview Road
Minnetonka Beach, MN 55361