

Bernard Joseph Hillen

1924 - 2019



HILLEN, Bernard Joseph April 24, 1924 - October 22, 2019 Bernard J. "Bernie" Hillen, Lt. USNR (Ret.), first generation Irish-American and the first born of Nora O'Connor of Ballingary, County Limerick and Bernard Hillen of Banbridge, County Down, Ireland, was a Michigan farm boy and Golden Gloves Championship contender prior to enlistment at Great Lakes Naval Training Boot Camp in Feb. 1943. He was assigned to the V-12 program at Northwest Missouri State Teachers College, Marysville,

Missouri, and later to the Naval ROTC program at the University of Texas. He was commissioned Ensign with a BS in Naval Science and Tactics. He served as Engineering Officer aboard the mine sweeper, USS CHIEF AM315, clearing the Straits of Tsushima (between Korea and Japan), earning a battle star for this duty. (For more information, go to https://www.cah.utexas.edu/museums/naval_rotc.php)

Bernie returned to UT and graduated with a BS in Mechanical Engineering. October, 1948 he married Louise Connelly, first born of Mary Agnes Fischer and Webb Connelly. They purchased Connelly's Florist from her father in 1954. Bernie was dedicated to his new profession, serving as President of the 2,000-member Texas State Florist Association in 1960. He was elected to the 20,000-member Florist Transworld Delivery (FTD) Association Board of Directors in 1964; subsequently serving in the offices of Treasurer, Vice President and finally President in 1972. He was then elected to the Vice Presidency of Interflora, the worldwide organization with members in 139 nations. Ten years later, he returned to the FTD Board for a record total of 12 years' service to his beloved fellow members.

Between stints with FTD, Bernie was active locally as Director of Junior Chamber of Commerce, Third Degree Knights of Columbus, Lions Club, Elks Lodge, Toastmasters, and a Paul Harris member of North Austin Rotary with 10 years perfect attendance. Bernie also maintained a perfect record with Friends of Bill W. since 1969.

Bernie remained active with the Naval Research Reserve Unit 8-5 at the University of Texas, retiring at 20 years in 1963. He served a two-year term as President of the Greater Central Texas Council Navy League of the United States of which he was a Life Member, and Charter Member in 1962. He was also a Life Member of DAV 173 and a Life Member of VFW 8787. His thwarted ambition to be a Naval Pilot was assuaged in 1976 with his solo flight at age 52.

Bernie enjoyed the outdoors and was an avid hunter of dove, quail and ducks. Louise and Bernie retired December 1988, passing the 78-year old business to the fourth generation, son Michael Hillen and daughter Colleen Goodman, who retired in 2002.

Bernie is predeceased by Louise, sons Michael and Timothy. He is survived by son Patrick, his wife Cindy, their children Shaun and his wife Jennifer, Michelle and husband Ed Klump their daughter Evaline; Michael's wife Becky, and children Christopher Paul, Michael Bernard and Jeanne Louise, Jeanne's children Brandon, Caysen and Shelby; daughter Colleen Goodman her son Corey and wife Christine and daughter Erin and her sons Hunter and Harrison. Condolences may be sent to: www.harrellfuneralhomes.com.

Published in Austin American-Statesman on Oct. 29, 2019