



Frank Brownell Mehlenbacher

February 16, 1927 - June 25, 2019

Frank Brownell Mehlenbacher, of Pittsford, a longtime banker and avid camera collector, died June 25, 2019, in St. Ann's Care Center, Webster, N.Y. He was 92 and passed away peacefully with his niece at his side, after a period of declining health.

Mr. Mehlenbacher was beloved by many for his ready smile, vivacity, kindness and curiosity. Those qualities, accentuated by his dignified bearing and sense of duty to his community, never failed him.

What made Frank truly stand out, however, was his work ethic. It served him through childhood and the Depression, which was such a difficult time for his family that he would have been coatless upon arriving in Rochester from Florida with his mother and sister if the stationmaster in Florida had not telegraphed a rail colleague in Washington to help the travelers. The failure of his family's once thriving Florida orange grove and the resulting decision for Frank, his sister and their widowed mother to move in with his uncle in upstate New York was a defining event of his life.

After his Navy service during World War II, stationed at Pearl Harbor as an electrician just out of high school, Mr. Mehlenbacher's enthusiasm for working hard led him steadily up the ranks of First Federal Savings of Rochester.

Hired in 1953, he was appointed manager of the bank's just-opened Eastway office two years later, and subsequently managed the Irondequoit, Pittsford and Brighton offices. He became an assistant vice president in 1965 and was elected senior vice president and corporate secretary in 1973, serving in those capacities until his retirement 10 years later. As an executive he assumed responsibility for various administrative departments, and from 1973 to 1975 also negotiated mergers with a half-dozen savings and loan companies in Syracuse, Albany, Buffalo and elsewhere. Among other career highlights he was instrumental in the design, construction, interior decor and leasing of First Federal Plaza.

He had the hands and heart of a craftsman, along with an eye for precision and

excellence, and in other circumstances could have been an engineer. He carefully built a collection of Kodak cameras and memorabilia, spending countless happy hours at flea markets hunting and bargaining.

Cameras and photography lore were natural attractions, stemming from his love and admiration for his grandfather, Frank A. Brownell, who began making cameras in Rochester in 1883. Two years later Mr. Brownell and George Eastman began a 17-year business relationship, during which Mr. Brownell's company designed and manufactured the cameras and related apparatus sold under the Eastman or Kodak label. Mr. Eastman, who prized Mr. Brownell's work, in 1902 bought the assets of his company. Mr. Brownell moved on to start a gasoline motor business, running a modern factory on Lexington Avenue.

Mr. Mehlenbacher amassed an impressive collection of photographic memorabilia, and built beautiful cabinets for their display in his home, all the while forwarding the legacy of his ancestor. The subject of cameras and Mr. Brownell's role in their evolution stirred his grandson endlessly. This passion produced great personal satisfaction, garnered him notice in camera circles locally and beyond, and helped make him a lifelong learner eager for every tidbit and story from that corner of history.

Good humor and a twinkle in his eye were constants of encounters with Frank Mehlenbacher. He enjoyed people, cherishing family and friends and always chatting up store clerks and folks in line. Generous with wisdom, encouragement and time, he belonged to various organizations including The Photographic Historical Society, founded in 1966, of which he was a charter member. He was particularly devoted to Rotary, first as a member and then president of the Penfield Rotary Club, followed by a long association with the Rochester Rotary. He was recognized by the latter for achieving 50 years of perfect attendance. He delighted in life.

Mr. Mehlenbacher leaves a niece, Janet M. Darden of Richmond, Va.; a nephew, Stephen A. McDonald of Northborough, Mass.; and his dear companion, Grace E. Fraatz of Webster, N.Y. His wife of 46 years, Shirley (Pease) Mehlenbacher, died in 1996. His sister, Helen M. McDonald of Fairfax, Va., died in 2015. Born in Clearwater, Fla., he was the son of Frank E. and Mildred (Brownell) Mehlenbacher.

A Memorial Service will be held on July 27 at 11 AM at the First Baptist Church of Penfield, 1862 Penfield Road, Penfield, N.Y. Private burial was in Rochester's Riverside Cemetery. For updated information, to share a memory or send a condolence visit www.anthonychapels.com. Private burial was in Rochester's Riverside Cemetery.

Memorial contributions may be made to First Baptist Church of Penfield 1862 Penfield Rd, Rochester, NY, 14625 www.fbpenfield.org; Rochester Rotary Charitable Trust 180 Linden Oaks, Suite 200, Rochester, NY, 14618 www.rochesterrotary.org; or Shirley P. Mehlenbacher Endowment Fund of the Penfield Symphony Orchestra, 1587 Jackson Road, Penfield, NY, 14526 www.penfieldsymphony.com

Cemetery

Riverside Cemetery

2650 Lake Ave.

Rochester, NY, 14612

Events

JUL **Funeral Service** **11:00AM**

27

First Baptist Church Of Penfield

1862 Penfield Rd., Penfield, NY, US, 14526

Comments



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Todd Gustavson - July 01 at 05:17 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Todd Gustavson - July 01 at 04:13 PM