



Dr. Louis M. Berninger

February 14, 2019

Dr. Louis M. Berninger, age 89, passed away peacefully on February 14, 2019 in Sarasota Florida. He was born the oldest of two sons in the Bronx, New York City to Louis and Louise Berninger. Louis was a graduate of Dewitt Clinton High School in the Bronx. He received his bachelor's in floriculture and master's in horticulture from Michigan State University. He received his PhD in Marketing from the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he worked for 30 years. He was a control tower operator in the Fifth Recruit Battalion M.C.R.D. of Platoon 422 stationed at Quantico from 1951-1953. Following retirement, he was the head of marketing for the ornamental division of Speedling, Inc. in Florida from 1984-1992. He served as president of the Kiwanis Club of West Bradenton from 1992-1993. He was president in 2011 of the Sarasota-Manatee Chapter of the Wisconsin Alumni Association and currently served on the board.

Survivors include his wife Miriam of 67 years; children Mary Lou, Linda (Rick), Jo Ann (Christian), and Doug; grandchildren, Amy Li, Mia Xing, Brandon, Kristina, Julie, Josh and Louisa, greatgrandchildren Matt, Ben, Micah, Kaden and Tyler, niece and nephews and many cousins.

Lou is being buried with military honors at the Sarasota National Veterans Cemetery on Thursday March 28, 2019 at 11:00 am. Memorials may be directed to the Suncoast Chapter of the Wisconsin Alumni Association for Student Scholarships (<https://chapters.uwalumni.com/sarasota/scholarships/>) or the Allen Centennial Garden (<https://allencentennialgarden.org>).

Dad taught us great values in life by example:

- When we were young growing up in a very white neighborhood, he invited 2 African grad students, Justice and Lucas who we adored, to live with us for the summer.
- He supported women's rights before it was even a cause.
- He taught us the value of community service with all the activities he did, whether it was with FFA, 4H, the Boy Scouts or

the many activities with Kiwanis.

- Dad showed us that hard work could accomplish anything including getting 4 kids through college debt free.
- Plant sales at the Farmers Market at the Square and the Union were quite a feat.
- We were amazed to learn that Dad was scared of speaking before large groups... yet he conquered his fear and spoke at conventions all across the nation including having his own television show “Garden Almanac.”
- Family was number one to Dad and he supported everything we wanted to do.
- Our Dad adored his grandchildren and continued encouraging them in the same manner.
- Dad taught us pride and loyalty by attending the UW Badgers football game every week, even when we lost every game. We believe that he had season football tickets for around 50 years and greatly enjoyed having seats in the 1st row on the 45-yard line of the upper deck.
- Dad was also an avid Badger hockey and basketball fan, having season tickets for many years.
- After moving to Florida, they continued the trek to Madison every fall to see all their cherished friends and watch the Badgers finally winning most games.
- Dad loved to travel and saw the world with Mom, even having planned a trip, although unable to go, with Doug to Machu Picchu last summer.
- Most importantly he taught us to include everyone; he made people feel comfortable with his ease of chatting with them.

Dr. Louis M Berninger was an emeritus professor of horticulture and university extension at the University of Wisconsin Madison. During his 30 years, from 1954–1984, he built a nationally recognized program in floriculture extension. Lou helped establish the Extension Committee of American Society of Horticulture Science, serving as the first chairman. He worked extensively on education programs in merchandising floriculture crops and was one of the initial extension specialists providing guidance to the developing bedding plant industry. Lou fostered personal relationships through his frequent visits to greenhouses and garden centers across Wisconsin to help them with growing and marketing concerns. Lou also helped to assess horticultural plant problems before the UW disease and insect diagnostic centers were created. He worked closely with the Society of American Florists and Bedd

ing Plants Inc. speaking frequently at industry conferences. Lou was instrumental in helping to formulate proposed Grades and Standards for Flower Crops.

He guided the development of the Madison and Milwaukee horticulture research gardens. While he was at the university, all of the education meetings for the greenhouse, garden center and nursery personnel were planned and organized by Lou.

In 1964, he developed and hosted the "Garden Almanac" television show for the home gardener on WHA-TV, which ran weekly in the Midwest for six years. Lou organized one of the first Educational Teleconference Network programs held in Wisconsin. He also played a role in creating one-minute taped broadcasts that were distributed to radio stations around the state. He published extensively in his field, including four books: Profitable Garden Center Management, Gardening Illustrated, Annuals Illustrated and Flower Arranging (illustrated by wife Miriam Berninger).

Louis developed a statewide Future Farmers of America (FFA) floriculture judging contest that produced a national winner in 1974. He coached Flower Judging Teams for approximately ten years, and hosted the National Intercollegiate Flower Judging Contest in 1980.

He served as Advisor for the UW-Madison PAX Chapter. Notably, he was the national president (previously V.P. and Secretary/Treasurer) of the ornamental and floriculture honorary society, Pi Alpha Xi. As President, he was responsible for establishing several new chapters. In 1994, he received the Pi Alpha Xi Fellows Award for his meritorious and excellence of service. He was also a member of Theta Xi, Alpha Zeta and Epsilon sigma Phi (National Extension Fraternity). Governor Knowles appointed him to the Natural Beauty Council in 1968 and he continued as program leader through 1971.

Lou and his wife, Miriam, hosted multiple flower tours of Europe, beginning in 1967. This helped to fuel his passion for travel.

Over the years, Lou was honored with numerous awards from many industry associations including:

- Society of American Florist Award for teaching, research and extension, 1960's
- Standard Oil Teaching Award 1969
- American Society for Horticultural Science Bittner extension award 1981
- Bedding Plants International Education Futura Award 1982
- Elected a Fellow in the American Society for Horticultural Science

1990's

- Induction to the Hall of Fame of the Wisconsin Green Industry Federation 2012

We will miss his sparkling wit and charming personality. Dad was an inspiration to us all. His genuine charm and frequent smile made everyone feel welcome.

With love from his wife Miriam and children, Mary Lou, Linda, Jo Ann, and Doug.

Cemetery

Sarasota National Cemetery

SR 72

Sarasota, FL,

Events

MAR 28 **Funeral Service** 11:00AM - 11:20AM

Sarasota National Cemetery

9810 State Rd 72, Sarasota, FL, US, 34241

Comments



“ We are very sorry to hear of Lou's death. Just found out today on Jan. 3, 2020 by checking Florida's obituaries and was concerned by not receiving a usual reply to our holiday letter. Lou and I go back about 70 years when we competed against each other's team (I was a member of the Ohio State team and Lou was on the Michigan State team) in a national flower judging event in either Washington, D.C. or Baltimore in 1950. We discovered this coincidence many years later after Lou worked in Wisconsin in floriculture extension and I was working in the family business, La Crosse Floral Co., in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Margaret and I did visit Lou and Miriam once on a trip to Florida and followed his career through their holiday letters also. We extend our sincere sympathy to the Berninger family at their loss.

Dick and Margaret Zoerb
Nashua, NH

Richard Zoerb - January 03, 2020 at 09:28 AM



“ I just today, March 30th found out about Lou's passing. I am so sorry! The pictures here are amazing!! I would like if someone would contact me. I have genealogy and photos to pass down from the McCurdy side of the family. I was suppose to get all of this sent to Miriam, but unfortunately I never have. Just today another McCurdy decendent has shown up and called me. My number is 814-379-3266. Again, so sorry for your loss. Sincerely, Kathy Curll-Hoenig

Kathy Curll-Hoenig - March 30, 2019 at 08:40 PM



“ Dear Miriam,

My sympathy to you and your family. Lou was not only an esteemed colleague in horticulture, but a good friend and a great guy. He'll be missed. It was a special time we all shared, with good memories for all of us to keep.

Sincerely,
Diane Newman

diane newman - March 15, 2019 at 10:31 PM



“ 2 files added to the album Dr. Louis M Berninger



Doug - March 01, 2019 at 08:28 AM



“ 8 files added to the album Dr. Louis M Berninger



Linda Sullivan - February 28, 2019 at 12:44 PM



“ 31 files added to the album Dr. Louis M Berninger



Linda Sullivan - February 26, 2019 at 02:48 PM



“ 16 files added to the album Dr. Louis M Berninger



Linda Sullivan - February 26, 2019 at 07:03 AM



“ 20 files added to the album Dr. Louis M Berninger



Linda Sullivan - February 25, 2019 at 04:15 PM



“ 23 files added to the album Dr. Louis M Berninger



Linda Sullivan - February 24, 2019 at 03:02 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Dr. Louis M Berninger



Jo Ann Heinrich - February 23, 2019 at 10:41 AM



“ 27 files added to the album Dr. Louis M Berninger



Jo Ann Heinrich - February 22, 2019 at 02:25 PM



“ 92 files added to the album Dr. Louis M Berninger



Linda Sullivan - February 22, 2019 at 11:34 AM