



Herbert G Brown

NOV 22, 1923 - APR 23, 2024



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Brown, Herbert “Herb” Graham passed away peacefully at his home on Clearwater Beach on April 23, 2024, at the age of 100. Born November 22, 1923, in Iota, Louisiana to T.G. and Mamie (Walker). He was a true servant of God and lived an exemplary Christian life. He was a loving father, husband, and family man, self-sacrificing, generous and a true southern gentleman to the end. Herb’s life was marked by success, but above all, it was characterized by his immense love for family, faith, and his fellow man. Herb unconditionally loved his wife of 71 years Diane (Fontenot), his 4 children, 10 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren. Known for his unwavering compassion and generosity Herb touched countless people through his acts of service and his genuine care of helping others.

Herb was raised in the Great Depression which shaped who he was and how he wanted to serve others. Herb grew up in a small-town in Opelousas, Louisiana. After his father’s sudden death at the age of 17 he was called upon to take over the family appliance business. Soon after he opened his first furniture store Brown’s Furniture. Herb grew Brown’s furniture into multiple stores and expanded his business dealings into shopping centers, and agricultural enterprises. Herb’s business enterprises extended across Louisiana and into Florida. Herb served in the U. S. Army during World War II (1943-45). He met his wife Diane, and they were married on October 18, 1953. Thanks to his energy and determination, Herb thrived in the business world. He built Brown’s Thrift City, a large discount store which was a first of its kind in Louisiana and one of the pioneer discount stores in the United States. Brown’s Thrift City became the largest local drug chain in the south. In 1970 he merged his stores with Jack Eckerd Corporation and relocated his family to Clearwater Florida where he served as Senior Vice President and Board member of Jack Eckerd Corporation. Herb was also active in single family residential development, mobile homes, and the apartment development business.

Moved by the Lord and his love for Diane and his son Graham, Herb poured out his heart and resources to build with Diane the Our Lady of Divine Providence House of Prayer where so many



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people have been blessed and healed over the last 40 plus years. The House of Prayer has grown into a 12-acre campus where the Marian Servants Community minister to laity and clergy. They come for retreats, healing prayer, Catholic speaker events, and spiritual direction training and certification at the Cenacle School of Spiritual Direction. From their inception at the House of Prayer, the Marian Servants have now grown to 16 affiliated communities nationwide. Herb received the Pontifical Award "Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice," the highest award conferred by the Holy See for distinguished service to the Church. He was also awarded the St. Jude the Apostle Award of the Diocese of St Petersburg.

In 1987 Herb acquired major interest in Checkers Drive-In Restaurants. The chain went public in 1991. He was Chairman of the Board of Checkers from 1989 to 1995 by the time he resigned to accept the presidency of Rotary International there were close to 500 restaurants (company-owned and franchises).

In 1995 he was appointed as Rotary International President and served that role from 1995-1996. Herb has been a member of Rotary International since 1945 and has over 60 years of perfect attendance. Herb has worked hard on promoting and living by his Rotary theme: Act with Integrity, Serve with Love, Work for Peace. He and Diane traveled the world meeting with United States Presidents, World Leaders, dignitaries, Bill Gates Foundation, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, and Pope John Paul II bringing a message of "peace, hope, love, service and support to our fellow man." From 1986 to 1990 Herb served as chairman of The Rotary International Polio Plus Campaign Committee where he helped raise over \$125 million dollars in the United States and more than \$240 million worldwide to help immunize more than 2 billion children over the world. During this time, he traveled to approximately 85 countries working on humanitarian and educational programs. Herb is the recipient of the Rotary International Service Above Self Award, Rotary's Foundation citation for Meritorious Service, the Rotary Foundation Distinguished Service Award and the Polio Plus Pioneer Award. Herb's true love was helping others, and he did that through his service with Rotary International.

Among his many awards as a businessman, he was inducted into Tampa Bay Business Hall of Fame and named Florida Entrepreneur of the Year in 1991. He has been selected to Who's Who in the World and Who Who's in American for many years. He received honorary degrees from four universities around the world including an honorary doctorate in humanities from the University of South Florida. Herb has been chairman and president of several banks and retail companies in Louisiana and Florida. He devoted much of his time to the Boy Scouts of American where he was



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Exec. Council (1945-69), and President of Boy Scouts of America (1969-1970). He was awarded the Eagle Scout, Distinguished Citizen, and Silver Beaver Award from the Boy Scouts of America. Also, Herb is past commander of the American Legion in Louisiana and served for 14 years as trustee and chairman of Morton Plant Hospital in Clearwater.

Herb has received numerous humanitarian awards including Citizen of the Year in the state of Louisiana; the Tampa Bay, Florida, Service to Mankind Award; the Watson Clinic Humanitarian of the Year Award for his work with Heartbeat International; and the Silver Medallion Brotherhood Award from the U.S. National Conference of Christians and Jews.

Herb or "Papa", as his family would call him, loved time spent with family. Herb's family brought him so much joy and happiness. He was a loving father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. He was proud of his family and the legacy he built through them. "Papa" was known by many to deliver truckloads of toys to local churches, schools, and YMCA's to underprivileged children. Also, for years Papa would personally deliver toys out of the trunk of his car wherever he went throughout the Christmas season. With such a big heart Herb brought happiness to not just his family, but to almost anyone he connected with. Herb loved watching sports, especially the LSU Tigers, ice cream and desserts were a close second behind his love of sports. His southern charm with that "Cajun" accent delighted so many. The love of his life Diane said it best "He was a great man!" Words he said he tried to live by: "I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. When I can do, I ought to do and what I ought to do By the Grace of God I will do."

Herb was preceded in death by his parents T.G. and Mamie (Walker), son Jared Griffith, and son H. Graham Brown Jr. He is survived by his wife Diane Brown; daughter Deborah (Brown) and husband Lee Arnold, son Jared and wife Mary Ellen (Auger) Brown; son Robert Gregory Brown and wife Karina (Mora); daughter Donna McMullen (Brown); granddaughter Alisha (Arnold) and husband Steve Lannon great-grandchildren Kaelee, Joshua, Beau; granddaughter Nicole (Arnold) and husband Ben Hull great-grandchildren Celeste and Evan; granddaughter Jordan (Brown) and husband Zach Olson great-granddaughter Everett; grandson Jared and wife Peyton (Rupel) Brown great-grandson Grant; grandson Graham Brown; granddaughter Savannah (Brown) and husband Sean Sebastian great-granddaughter Sunday; granddaughter Katherine; granddaughter Rachel (McMullen) and husband Michael Weber great-granddaughter Maxine; granddaughter Brooke (McMullen); grandson Cody (McMullen).



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A private funeral will be held with family. A celebration of life for family and friends will be on June 21, 2024, at Belleair Country Club, 1 Country Club Ln, Belleair, FL 33756. In lieu of flowers, a donation can be made to Our Lady of Divine Providence House of Prayer Foundation, Inc., 711 South Bayview Avenue, Clearwater, FL 33759 or Rotary International Foundation.



Tribute Wall

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Jeffery David posted:

In 1972 at our twentieth Opelousas AIC class reunion, Herbert was eleven years our senior. One of our class mates said, I can't wait to see Herbert I'll bet he's an old, old man now. When Herbert and Diane walked in, my class mate said, he'll, he looks younger than us. Many years later I recounted this story to Herbert at a school function and he excitedly called out, Hey Diane, Come see what Jeffery's saying about me. Everybody needs a little praise occasionally, even Hebert.

October 10 at 8:42 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Herbert by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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