



Joseph S. Berger, Jr.

September 11, 1930 - May 28, 2010

Joseph S. Berger, Jr., 79, of Fond du Lac, died Friday, May 28, 2010, at home. Joe Berger spent his lifetime in community development. To say he was a driving force in the growth of Fond du Lac would be an understatement. Born in Canton Ohio on September 11, 1930, and spending the next 7 years in various cities throughout the Midwest, Joe arrived in Fond du Lac with his parents, Joe Sr. and Helen, during the height of the depression. Joe's first retail venture was selling produce door to door from his Radio Flyer wagon. His parents were busy establishing the foundations for what would become the premier women's fashion shops in the Midwest. Berger's and Elliot's in downtown Fond du Lac would prove to be only a prelude to the things to come for Joe. Joe attended Jefferson School, and became life-long friends with Jack Kelly and Mike "Don" Moore. The 9th street gang was often found hanging around the YMCA shooting baskets. Joe Attended St John's Military Academy in Delafield, WI, for his High School years (Class of 1948), but still was included in the Goodrich Reunions because of the strong friendships he had forged. Joseph went on to earn a Bachelor in Business at the University of Wisconsin Madison (1952). During his college years, he enlisted in the Naval ROTC Program and resided at the Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity House. There he developed the friendships that would become a support system lasting a lifetime. Following college, Joe proudly served in the United States Navy aboard the USS Daly DD-519; he earned the rank of Lieutenant JG. Traveling around the world, the seeds of passion for travel took root. His fellow

shipmates became some of his most loyal supporters as Joe battled Mesothelioma, a deadly cancer caused by asbestos. Upon his return from the Navy, Joe joined his parents in their growing women's apparel business, helping establish stores in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Missouri. Joe invested not only his strong business skills in each of the stores, but became a part of the community through chairing the United Way for many years, organizing Blood Banks with the Red Cross, and fund raising for numerous causes and organizations in the community of Fond du Lac. Joe often recounted selling fruitcakes door to door for the Jaycees during a horrid winter blizzard, as an example of total dedication to the cause. Joe Berger never did anything half way! Joe was also one of the founding board members of the Fond du Lac Area Foundation. In 1999 the FDAF awarded him the Legacy Award for outstanding commitment to the community of Fond du Lac. Joe and his father Joe Sr. worked tirelessly to convince legislators of the need for a two year UW campus in Fond du Lac. This dream of accessible education here in the community was accomplished. Joe served on the Board of Visitors for many years acting as a liaison to the Madison Campus. Joe was also a member of a wide array of community and state wide organizations and served each with the Berger style of commitment, and dedication. Joe lived by the Rotary Club tenant of "Service Above Self". In addition to the Noon Rotary Club he was a member of: Bascom Hill Society, Wisconsin Gridiron Club, Wisconsin Business Alumni, Temple Beth Israel, B'nai B'rith, South Hills Country Club, Elks Lodge #57, American Legion Post 0075, Tin Can Sailors Inc., Navy League of the USA., VFW Post 1904, Fond du Lac Historical Society, Ducks Unlimited, Wisconsin Waterfowlers, and EAA. In the early 70's the Bergers began work on the west side of Fond du Lac. A new highway, and new retail opportunities were on the horizon. Joe and his father embarked on their most ambitious project ever, Forest Mall, with Simon and Associates as well as Forest Plaza, the Forest Manor subdivision and Forest Manor Apartments. With the opening of Bergers at Forest Mall, their dream was coming true. Carrying the top labels in Women's apparel, it became "the place

where smart women shop”On August 11, 1988 Joe ventured into the most serious partnership of his life. He married the love of his life, Judith Otten Arends, at the Churchill Inn in Door County. In 1993 Joe retired from the retail business, and joined his wife in designing, planning and escorting group travel programs for Discovery World Travel/Travel Leaders of Fond du Lac. Over the next 19 years, the Bergers escorted over 12,000 passengers on trips to the far corners of the world. No group tour was complete without the wit and knowledge that Joe brought to the adventure. His passion for travel was contagious. Anyone traveling with them felt their love for each other, as they side by side drew the guests into the magical foreign dream come true trips. From strolling the beaches of Playa del Carmen to blowing bubbles at the top of the Eiffel Tower, their passion for each other and travel permeated the groups. For the last five years Joe has valiantly fought the deadly disease, caused by exposure to asbestos, Mesothelioma. The research team at the University of Chicago was responsible for extending his life. Joe was one of the longest survivors of this disease in the country. Joe is survived by his wife, Judith; two step-sons: Gregg Arends and Calvin Yeung, both of Irvine, CA; his mother-in-law: Verda Otten of Sheboygan; three sisters-in-law: Nancy Otten of Sheboygan, Susan (Francesco) Milana of Jacksonville, FL, and Karen (Steve) Schivelbein of Annapolis, MD; two brothers-in-law: Mark Otten of Shrewsbury, NJ, and Thomas Otten of Rochester, MN; nieces and nephews: Cassandra Otten, Zach Otten, and Jason Otten. He was preceded in death by his father, Joseph S. Berger, Sr.; his mother, Helen Nussbaum Berger; a brother, Donald Berger; a step-son, Douglas Arends; and his father-in-law, Henry Otten. Mourning with Judith and Gregg, as family, will also be: Harold and Joyce Cohen, William and Penny Werner, Richard and Marilyn Zangl, Arthur and Claudia Hintz, Steven and Catherine Jones, and Charles and Prudy Birringer, and young people who have been mentored by Joe, Georgianne Jones, Monica Develice, Wyatt and Zach Zangl, and Jessica Werner. The family will receive visitors from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Thursday June 3,

2010, at Mach Funeral Chapel & Crematory, 31 E. Division Street, Fond du Lac, followed by a graveside service at 4:00 p.m. at the Temple Beth Israel Section of Rienzi Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, and in keeping with Joe's request, donations may be made to The Berger Family Fund, established within the Fond du Lac Area Foundation, to enhance the community of Fond du Lac. The family wishes to thank the hundreds of friends who have stood by, supported, laughed with, cried with, and followed "Joe's Journey" during this half decade. May your lives be enhanced by knowing this wonderful man. May your own personal journey be easier because of what you have learned. May you always remember his smile, his wit, and his advice to you.

Tribute Wall

JS

“ *Judith we are so sorry, you will be in our prayers.*

Joe & Becky Schmitt - June 11, 2010 at 04:16 PM

JZ

“ *Having worked with Joe in the Mall for many years. We shared some good times and he will always be missed.*

Joanne Zimmerman - June 06, 2010 at 09:05 AM

LD

“ *Dear Judith, When I think back, I remember Joe always having a cheerful greeting and a big smile. I am very sorry for your loss. My deepest sympathy to you and your family during this difficult time.*

Lisa Day - June 03, 2010 at 11:47 PM

CS

“ *Judith, You have my sympathy. I know you will miss him tremendously. He was such a good man and thought the world of you. It was so good that you had these last couple of weeks to prepare him and you for the future. God bless both of you. Carol and Leo Schneider*

Carol Schneider - June 03, 2010 at 07:05 PM

RG

“ *Joseph S. Berger, Jr.*

Rose Gagnon - June 03, 2010 at 06:46 PM

BR

“ We are sorry for your loss. You are in our prayers.

Bruce & Geri Rock - June 03, 2010 at 03:43 PM

GL

“ My deepest sympathy to you, Judith, & to Joe's family & friends for the loss of a wonderful man. Joe was my second cousin who I saw every couple years while I was a little kid, & then did not see him again for 50 years until you came here last year. I am so glad he found a beautiful loving woman to share his life with. He will always be remembered with warm & happy memories. Love, Georgia

Georgia Lucas - June 03, 2010 at 11:15 AM

BD

“ Dear Judith - You and your family are in our thoughts and prayers. Joe was a wonderful man, and the love the two of you exhibited made those around you stronger. May you find peace in the wonderful memories the two of you created.

Bob & Judy Docter - June 03, 2010 at 08:20 AM

LL

“ Dear Judith, When I think back, I remember Joe always having a cheerful greeting and a big smile. I am very sorry for your loss. My deepest sympathy to you and your family during this difficult time.

Lisa Day of Fond du Lac - June 03, 2010 at 12:00 AM

BW

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Bruce & Geri Rock of Kaukauna, WI - June 03, 2010 at 12:00 AM

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Bob & Judy Docter of Menasha, WI - June 03, 2010 at 12:00 AM

CW

“ Judith, You have my sympathy. I know you will miss him tremendously. He was such a good man and thought the world of you. It was so good that you had these last couple of weeks to prepare him and you for the future. God bless both of you. Carol and Leo Schneider

Carol Schneider of Fond du Lac WI - June 03, 2010 at 12:00 AM

KR

“ I worked for both Joe Sr. and Joe Jr. at the Forest Mall location during high school. I have many fond memories of that time. I now work for Simon Properties as the Forest Mall General Manager. I learned a lot from Joe and appreciate his knowledge with me.

Karen Rausch - June 02, 2010 at 07:43 PM

DG

“ A wise woman told me a few months ago when my father-in-law died that we would now have a guardian angel watching over us. We now have one more angel to watch over us and you will have one also. Joe will be missed dearly by all of us and we will have those wonderful memories of our travels together and the girls won't forget how he was there on their first trip to Mexico. Love always,
The Schmitz'

Don and Sherri Schmitz and girls - June 02, 2010 at 07:21 PM

FC

“ Words are inadequate to express the sadness we feel about Joe's passing. We are here to support you in your time of grief. With sincere sympathy, Fred and Celeste

Fred and Celeste Christ - June 02, 2010 at 03:19 PM

SD

“ To Judith, Gregg and all of your family, please know that you have my deepest condolences. You are in my thoughts and prayers.

Shawn DeTroye - June 02, 2010 at 03:16 PM

LC

“ Dear Judith and family- I'm very sorry to learn of Joe's passing. I always enjoyed reading your journeys over the last few years. Joe was blessed to have an angel like you by his side. My thoughts and prayers are with you. -Lara Chereso

Lara Chereso - June 02, 2010 at 09:21 AM

CS

“ We are sad to learn of Joe's passing. He is so very loved. Our prayers are with you and the family. God bless you.

Crawford & Pat Smith - June 02, 2010 at 08:58 AM

LI

“ Dear Judith and family- I'm very sorry to learn of Joe's passing. I always enjoyed reading your journeys over the last few years. Joe was blessed to have an angel like you by his side. My thoughts and prayers are with you. -Lara Chereso

Lara Chereso of Chicago, Illinois - June 02, 2010 at 12:00 AM

DL

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Don and Sherri Schmitz and girls of Fond du lac - June 02, 2010 at 12:00 AM

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Fred and Celeste Christ of Fond du Lac, WI - June 02, 2010 at 12:00 AM

SM

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Shawn DeTroye of Minneapolis, MN - June 02, 2010 at 12:00 AM

CW

“ We are sad to learn of Joe's passing. He is so very loved. Our prayers are with you and the family. God bless you.

Crawford & Pat Smith of Sheboygan, WI - June 02, 2010 at 12:00 AM

EF

“ Judith, May God Bless and keep you in this time of sorrow.

Evan and DeeDee Fischer - June 01, 2010 at 07:16 PM

AM

“ Judith, Please accept my condolences on the passing of Joe. He was loved and admired by everyone. He will be missed a great deal.

Al Mauch - June 01, 2010 at 06:39 PM

PK

“ Sorry to hear of Joe's passing. It was nice to have met you and Joe on our trip to Jamaica.

Paul and Marietta Klauck - June 01, 2010 at 04:23 PM

SS

“ Dear Judith, My sympathy to you and your family. I had only known Joe for a few years. It was a great pleasure to have had the opportunity to work with him and yourself. The community of Fond du Lac will miss his many contributions and great presence. Please know that you are in the thoughts and prayers of many.
Sue Stephany

Sue Stephany - June 01, 2010 at 03:01 PM

CB

“ Judith, I'm sure you know what Joe meant to our family. My Mother spent half of her life with him. She has always cared very much about him. What a wonderful last visit you made possible for her, Ruthie and Marlene. It meant so much to each of them. As for me, my memories from childhood and beyond make me smile. Joe was the most caring wonderful man, who always made me feel special. He put up a very good fight and did it with such grace. He is now cancer free driving the Mustang smiling at all of us. May you find comfort in your memories. What a great love between you both.
With our Deepest Sympathy Charlotte & Mary Beth

Charlotte Bunker & Mary Beth - June 01, 2010 at 01:39 PM

JS

“ *Our deepest sympathy to you Judith.*

John,Dolores &Joe Supple - June 01, 2010 at 08:30 AM

JH

“ *What an accomplished and wonderful man who truly understood the meaning of community. He has touched so many. I was glad to have known him through the FDL Rotary.*

Jo Ann Hall - June 01, 2010 at 08:24 AM

PW

“ *Sorry to hear of Joe's passing. It was nice to have met you and Joe on our trip to Jamica.*

Paul and Marietta Klauck of Sheboygan Falls, Wi. - June 01, 2010 at 12:00 AM

SW

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Sue Stephany of Fond du Lac, Wi - June 01, 2010 at 12:00 AM

CL

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Charlotte Bunker & Mary Beth of Fond du Lac - June 01, 2010 at 12:00 AM

JL

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Jo Ann Hall of Fond du Lac - June 01, 2010 at 12:00 AM

EW

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Evan and DeeDee Fischer of Lake Delton, Wisconsin - June 01, 2010 at 12:00 AM

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Al Mauch of FDL - June 01, 2010 at 12:00 AM

JH

“ We are so sorry for the loss of such a great man. Our deepest sympathies go out to Judith and the family. Our thoughts and prayers are with you at this sad and difficult time. Jeff & Janet Hopper

Jeff & Janet Hopper - May 31, 2010 at 08:31 PM

MM

“ My family and friends would like to send condolences to one fantastic man. He was so smiling and cheerful beyond words, and we will miss him. May He rest in peace, and let us say, "Amen."

Marc and Harriet Manis - May 31, 2010 at 08:02 PM

RM

“ I am so sorry to hear of the passing of one of the Daly's crew. My father was part of that crew from 1942 to 1946 and shares that kinship.

Robert Moore - May 31, 2010 at 07:56 PM

JW

“ Judith, although I never had the opportunity to meet Joe, your Facebook entries make me sure he was a wonderful person. I know his family and friends will all miss him deeply. You need to know how great a role model you are. I look to you with absolute awe and respect. I will try to do better to live up to your example, now and in the future.

Janet L Witthuhn - May 31, 2010 at 07:30 PM

NH

“ It was a privlage and honor to get to know Joe, he was an amazing asset to the Fond du Lac community and all those who had the change to get to know him. We will miss him dearly.

Nathan, Marcia and Meagan Haupt - May 31, 2010 at 06:33 PM

BC

“ Our thoughts are with you.

Brett & Judy Crabtree - May 31, 2010 at 04:50 PM

PM

“ Dear Judith & family, our deepest condolences. We keep you in our thoughts and prayers and know Joe has found peace and his reward. What a fabulous man...his smile and goodness last forever. We'll always keep the Caramel Cashew in Joe's memory!

Pat & Rick Miller - May 31, 2010 at 12:32 PM

VS

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with you. Joe fought harder and longer than anyone we've ever seen. May God's blessing of peace be with him and with you.

Vicki and Jerry Stewart - May 31, 2010 at 10:22 AM

AS

“ My sincerest sympathies for your loss. Thinking about you.
-Alana

Alana Siegel - May 31, 2010 at 10:09 AM

ZZ

“ Joe was truly one of my most valued mentors and friends. I learned so much from him during our discussions and travels. I will sorely miss those times.

Zachary Zangl - May 31, 2010 at 10:03 AM

JP

“ I feel that I have known Joe through your words and pictures, Judith. I am thankful for his life and all that he has meant to you, the community, and the world. God bless you as you carry on his legacy.

Jeanne Pacilli - May 31, 2010 at 09:03 AM

MG

“ What a beautiful tribute to a wonderful man. My sincere sympathy goes out to the family.

Margie Gundelach - May 31, 2010 at 08:26 AM

MF

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Marc and Harriet Manis of Winter Springs, FL - May 31, 2010 at 12:00 AM

JW

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Janet L Witthuhn of Sand Creek, WI - May 31, 2010 at 12:00 AM

PA

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Pat & Rick Miller of Mesa, AZ - May 31, 2010 at 12:00 AM

AY

“ My sincerest sympathies for your loss. Thinking about you.-Alana

Alana Siegel of New York, New York - May 31, 2010 at 12:00 AM

JA

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Jeanne Pacilli of Chandler, AZ - May 31, 2010 at 12:00 AM

ML

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Margie Gundelach of Fond du Lac - May 31, 2010 at 12:00 AM

RK

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Robert Moore of kentucky - May 31, 2010 at 12:00 AM

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Jeff & Janet Hopper of Fond du Lac - May 31, 2010 at 12:00 AM

RG

“ I managed a store at Forest Mall during some of the years Joe was running his store. He always had a smile on his face as he often walked the mall to greet mall staff and customers. Joe always stopped to say hello.

Rhonda Gurno - May 30, 2010 at 03:27 PM

RL

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Rhonda Gurno of Fond du Lac - May 30, 2010 at 12:00 AM