

Flags, friends salute passing of Scottsburg's first mayor, Blake Burns

Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 03 December 2013 00:00 -

Blake Burns always enjoyed a good conversation with family members and friends.

Known for his congenial and gentlemanly manners, Burns, Scottsburg's first mayor, died on Tuesday, November 26, after a brief illness. He was 95.

He saw a lot of changes in his adopted hometown over the years as Scottsburg evolved from a small town to a bustling city located next to Interstate 65.

Born on June 2, 1918, in Salem to the late Rev. Harvey S. and Clara Batt Burns, he was a graduate of Gosport High School and Campbellsville College (now University) in Kentucky. He was a U.S. Army veteran of World War II, seeing action in the China-Burma-India theatre. In 1946, he married his sweetheart, the former Iva Sue Herrington of Laurel, Ms. In 1949, the couple moved to Scottsburg. They opened Burns 5&10, a variety store on the west side of Scottsburg's downtown square.

Because of his business background, Burns served as president of the then Scottsburg Chamber of Commerce. Over the years, the couple was blessed with two daughters, Marcia and Christy.

When a National Guard was established in Scottsburg in 1955, Burns received the commission of Captain and was appointed the first commander of the unit. He later served as Tank Battalion Commander over Southern Indiana and eventually earned the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

His most important role in the community came in 1964 when he was elected as Scottsburg's first mayor. With the City Council, he helped lead the transition from a town to a city during his three four-year terms. He worked to develop the Scottsburg Senior Housing Commission, which was one of the first entities to provide low-cost homes for senior citizens at Craig Park on Scottsburg's north side.

He also vigorously supported such projects as the renovation of the city's Lake Iola,

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transforming it from a neglected pond that once served to cool interurban engines into an attractive city park.

As Scottsburg's Mayor, Burns served as president of the Southern Indiana Mayors Roundtable, vice president of the board of directors of River Hills Economic Development District and Regional Planning Commission and as a member of the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns.

Burns was, above all, a family man. He served the First Baptist Church of Scottsburg in a variety of ways, including as chairman of deacons. His other memberships included American Legion Scottsburg Post 234, Scottsburgh Lodge 572 F&AM, Scottish Rite Valley of Indianapolis, Preservation Alliance Inc. and the Scott County Historic Society, through which he served as project director of Heritage Downtown Scottsburg, an early preservation and restoration campaign.

His many awards included being named the South Central Indiana Council for the Aging and Aged Inc., Area 14, Older Hoosier of the Year in 1993 as well as receiving the Indiana Governor's coveted Sagamore of the Wabash designation.

After his retirement from public office, Burns found time to serve on the Area 14 board of directors and the Scott County Cemetery Commission. In the 1990s, he also threw his support behind creation of a county museum. He and his wife have often enjoyed many of the programs offered by the Scott County Heritage Center and Museum.

Those loved ones who preceded him in death include his parents, a sister, Virginia Burns Ball, and two sons-in-law, Dave Reeves and Terry Fewell.

His survivors are his wife; two daughters, Marcia Reeves-Fewell of Scottsburg, and Christina "Christy" Beardsley of Zionsville; four grandchildren, Scott Reeves, Kristin Reeves Pond and husband Charlie, Brian Burns Beardsley and Jacqueline Robison and husband Ben; several nieces and nephews; step-grandchildren and step-great-grandchildren.

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Calling was observed at the Collins Funeral Home in Scottsburg on Sunday evening, December 1.

The funeral was conducted at his church on Monday morning, December 2. The Rev. Jon Self officiated.

Burial was in Scottsburg Cemetery but only after the procession drove past Scottsburg City Hall one last time. City employees raised a huge American flag over McClain Avenue as a silent tribute to a good man and leader.

Memorial contributions may be arranged through the staff of the funeral home in Scottsburg to benefit his church.

On-line condolences may be expressed by visiting www.collinsfuneralhome.net.