



Mario Pastega

December 16, 1916 - January 20, 2012

Mario D. Pastega peacefully passed away on Friday, Jan. 20, while his daughter, Lisa, held his hand. Although he was in the care of Overlake Hospital and Medical Center in Bellevue, Wash., all of Mario's children and grandchildren were in attendance throughout his stay. Mario will be returned to his home of Corvallis, where he lived for more than 50 years.

Mario was born in San Francisco, Calif., to Giuseppina and Romano Pastega, but the family actually lived in Weed, Calif.

Mario attended Weed Elementary School and Weed High School, where he played trumpet and high school basketball. After having graduated at the age of 16, he went on to receive a degree at the Armstrong School of Business in Berkeley, Calif.

Hard work and a good work ethic were always a major part of Mario's character, as he washed dishes to pay his own way through business school. It was this strong work ethic that he always exhibited, and also appreciated in others. Nowhere was this more evident than in the fact that he was still working at the age of 95.

In May 1937, he met Alma Solari, and they started dating. Their love for each other continued to blossom, and they were married on April 24, 1938. Mario worked on the staff of the district attorney's office in Yreka, Calif., at a salary of \$90 per month. With nothing down and no interest, Mario and Alma purchased their first home for \$1,200, with house payments of \$15 per month. Another of Mario's great character strengths was his love of family. Mario and

Alma were blessed with the first of their five children, Gary, born in 1942. Their next child, Emilie Jo, was born in 1944. The most traumatic experience in Mario and Alma's life was the loss of Emilie Jo due to an accident in 1968. She was only 23.

The family continued living in Yreka until Mario entered the service during World War II. Alma and the two children moved to Mount Shasta to stay with her family, and then to San Diego, Calif., to be with Mario, who was in the U.S. Navy.

After Mario's discharge from the Navy, the family moved back to Yreka, where Mario returned to his position as an assistant county clerk in the district attorney's office. Then in 1946, twin sons Ken and Denny were born.

In 1948, Mario had the opportunity to purchase a one-half interest in the Pepsi-Cola franchise in Klamath Falls from his brother-in-law, Elmer Kennedy. In 1951, Leo Bocchi purchased Elmer's interest in the franchise, and became Mario's new partner. Their great friendship gave them the ability to remain co-owners for more than 36 years.

In 1961, Lisa was born. Later that same year, the Pastega family moved to Benton County when Mario and Alma purchased the Pepsi-Cola franchise in Corvallis. In 1974, the Tillamook Pepsi-Cola franchise was acquired, and in 1986, Mario and Alma purchased the Pepsi-Cola franchise in Medford. In 1988, after the death of Mario's longtime friend and Klamath Falls partner, Leo Bocchi, Mario sold his interest in the franchise to the Bocchi family.

Mario's efforts in the beverage industry were always focused on the common good of his fellow bottlers. He served a term as president of the Oregon Soft Drink Association. He was the driving force to create Mt. Angel Beverage, a high-speed, highly efficient canning facility owned by all of the Oregon Pepsi-Cola franchise owners, and was its president for more than two decades.

He served a term as president of the Pepsi-Cola Bottlers' Association, created to help the independently owned franchises work with the company-owned franchises. Containers Northwest was established, with the help of Mario, to manufacture plastic bottles efficiently. In recognition of his many contributions

to the soft drink industry, he was inducted into the Beverage World Hall of Fame in 2002.

Not only was Mario dedicated to the success of his business, but he was also relentless when it came to helping improve his community. Whether an encouraging word, a pat on the back, a monetary or product donation or a personal appearance — whatever the need, Mario's answer was always "yes." Mario endowed the Golden Apple Award in 1996, honoring three of the Corvallis School District's most outstanding teachers and one stellar staff member. He had similar awards for Linn-Benton Community College and Western Oregon University.

He was never too busy to spend time with the Mr. or Ms. Spartan participants at Corvallis High School, or donate his time and resources to the Boys & Girls Clubs.

In 2004, Mario's beloved sister, Bianca, required heart surgery in Redding, Calif. Mario dropped everything to be by her side. While he was there, he stayed at a hospitality house to be near her. Mario's mind, always working, thought Corvallis' Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center could use such a house.

And in true Mario fashion, Corvallis now has the Mario Pastega House, which recently marked its 50,000th room night. The house has become such a popular addition to the community that fundraisers are going on all the time to help support the house for out-of-town patients and their families.

Mario helped lead several major fundraisers for the hospital, in addition to building the Mario Pastega House. He helped raise \$1.4 million for the Good Samaritan Cancer Center, and \$1.4 million to renovate Good Samaritan's intensive care unit and outpatient surgery center. He also led a \$4 million capital campaign to build the Ralph Hull Regional Heart Center. In addition, he had been a trustee of the Good Samaritan Hospital Foundation since 1981. Mario had a hand in the success of "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" when it came to Corvallis. The temperature was always in the 90s, and Mario made

sure the crew had all the water and Pepsi it needed.

He also delivered meals for Meals on Wheels, and participated in multiple fundraisers, from supplying beverages to flipping pancakes. He even threw out the first pitch at Pepsi-Cola Cap Night at a Corvallis Knights baseball game — and he was 93.

Mario was also a member of the Knights of Columbus for more than 50 years. And he loved to help young minds with scholarships at Oregon State University, LBCC and WOU. His efforts were recognized and rewarded with such accolades as the Oregon Philanthropists Award, Senior First Citizen, numerous awards from the chambers of commerce, and probably his most definitive award, the Oregon Ethics In Business Award.

He truly was Mr. Corvallis, so much so that he was named the Gazette-Times' Top of the Valley 2011 Reader's Choice Best Local Person of the Year, as voted on by Benton and Linn counties.

The list of Mario's contributions, fundraising efforts and awards goes on and on all year, every year. So Mario always ended his year with the Pepsi-Cola Christmas Display, and had since 1985. When asked why he never charged admission to the display, he remarked that this was something everyone should be able to enjoy, with no strings attached. And the more people enjoyed the Christmas display, the more Mario looked forward to Christmas. Mario is survived by his sister, Bianca Pastega, of Mount Shasta; sons Gary Pastega and Ken Pastega, both of Corvallis, and Denny Pastega of Tillamook; daughter Lisa Altig of Kirkland, Wash.; 15 grandchildren; and 15 great-great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his precious wife of 69 years, Alma Pastega, in 2008; and their daughter Emilie Jo Simpson in 1968.

Mario always attributed his good health and long life to "a Pepsi a day," and if you ever called his cell phone and got his outgoing message, the last thing he would say was "Have a Pepsi day."

A Rosary/Vigil will take place at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 26, at St. Mary's Catholic Church, 501 N.W. 25th St. in Corvallis. A Funeral Mass is planned for

1:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 27, also at St. Mary's.

In memory of Mario, contributions can be made to the Mario Pastega House Endowment Fund in care of the Good Samaritan Hospital Foundation at 3600 N.W. Samaritan Drive, Corvallis, OR 97330.

Tribute Wall

BO

“ My thoughts are with you All. Thanks for the training to drive truck Gary and Denny and the work. I lost my wife Michaele to cancer two years ago but I am doing well. I now drive truck again (triples) in Boise to Umatilla. My girls are both married. I remember Mario asking me when I worked on a problem in my early days of computer tech training if I knew what I was doing and I said Yes! I still repair computers in my spare time. Have a good one. Tell Joey I said hi and both Denny's boys. Also Hi to Larry and Aslaug Briggs in Tillamook.

Bobbie A. Owen - February 03, 2012 at 01:28 PM