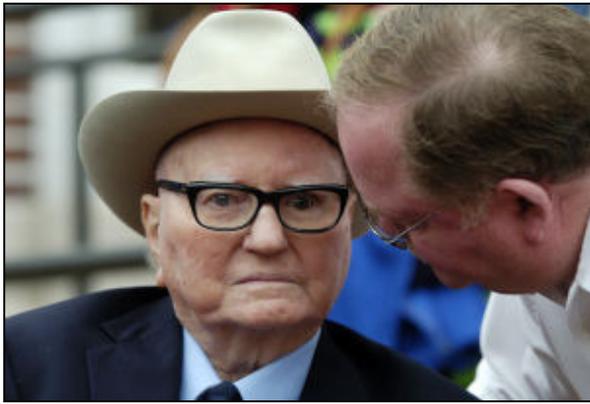


Nacogdoches mourns loss of Charles Bright

Andrew D. Brosig/The Daily Sentinel

Posted: Saturday, August 24, 2013 11:30 pm

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Charles Bright

The man of the hour Charles Bright, right, listens as F.E. "Ab" Abernethy, at podium left, addresses the crowd March 22 during dedication ceremonies to rename the former post office building downtown as the Charles Bright Visitor Center. Bright, local business man and philanthropist, died Saturday at age 86.

Nacogdoches lost a lifelong resident who poured his heart into this city, always trying to make it a better, more beautiful place to live. Charles Bright, 86, philanthropist, innovator and co-founder of Bright Coop, died Saturday morning.

Francis "Ab" E. Abernethy said he lost a good friend, and Nacogdoches lost a real asset. "He had more stories of this town than anybody," Abernethy said, adding that Bright was born and raised right in the square downtown. "I think about all those stories lost."

Bright's father owned a grocery store in the Ingraham Building on Pilar Street, a building Bright later renovated. The building eventually housed his antique and art store. And just a few feet away, behind the downtown fire station, is where Bright and his sister, Joyce, were born.

On Saturday, Abernethy recalled all the ways Bright worked to make things better. "He was so dedicated to the improvement of downtown — well, the whole town," he said. No matter what the project, Abernethy said Bright "was always wanting to fix it."

"Nacogdoches was his town, and he gave to it, most liberally, all his life."

Bright assisted with the restoration of the depot on Main Street and was very influential in turning the downtown post office into what it is today, a center for visitors. He assisted in transforming the square into the Plaza Principal project, featuring beautiful landscaping, statues, benches and engraved bricks on the sidewalk. The visitors center was named for him in March of this year, and guest speakers talked about his character and his vision.



as Agribusiness of the Year in 2012.

Bright married Lois Marie Gibbs Daner at 40, and lived with her on Virginia Street in a home he restored to its Victorian splendor. According to a previously published Sentinel article, Bright's wife died of ALS, or Lou Gehrig's Disease, in 2006. Three years later he married Carolyn Muckelroy Price, widow of Travis Price.

The Rev. Rex Humphreys, retired pastor of First Christian Church, was very close friends with Bright. Though he knew the end was coming soon, the news still brought tears to his eyes when he found out Saturday. "I was his minister and he was an elder of the church," he said. "More than that, he was my true friend." Humphrey's said his association with Bright began in 1976 when he began his ministry at First Christian Church.

"He and I became close friends, not only in my capacity as his minister, but in a personal way as well," he said. "He was a true man of God, always ready to help anyone in need, as well as fulfilling the needs of the church. He will be greatly missed by the many, many friends who loved and respected him."

In a previous Sentinel article, Bright's wife said her husband referred to his employees at Bright Coop as his "children."

Bright Coop manager, Clem Russell, said he finds it fascinating that Bright has lived within two miles of the square his entire life. "So, for 85 years, he has been near the heart of the city which he loves," Russell has said.

Close friend, Bryan Holt Davis, spoke about Bright's childhood growing up on the square — how his father would often offer store credit to families who could not afford to pay for much-needed items. He also spoke of Bright's impact on Nacogdoches. "The things that he's done are just limitless," Davis said to a crowd on the city's square. "Charles Raymond got rich on the side while helping everybody else in town. As far as I can tell, he never profited one bit from all his good works."

Davis then read a quote by William Wordsworth. "That best portion of a good man's life, his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love," he said, looking down at Bright. "Well, Charles, that's what you have done, and it will never be forgotten."

Bright also served on the Nacogdoches County Hospital District Board of Directors for nearly two decades. Memorial Hospital auxiliary honored him for his service by building an addition to the hospital and naming it the Charles Bright Pavilion.

He's been recognized as "Citizen of the Year and as an "Agriculture Pioneer" for his work with his company, Bright Coop. His company was honored

Russell also spoke of Bright's early years and how the lessons he learned from his father led him to develop relationships "with not only the citizens of Nacogdoches County, but throughout the entire nation."

"In 1951, after returning home from serving his country in the United States Army, Charles and his brother, N.G., began a successful manufacturing business that has employed hundreds of people over the years and is still recognized today as the leading world supplier of 'live poultry' transportation and handling equipment," Russell said. "While managing and developing a business, Charles was also a driving force and promoter in many local organizations."



Russell called him a "bright spot for Nacogdoches."

In 2012, when Bright was being interviewed about his statue projects following the unveiling of 'The Gateway' statue on the square, he said life would be boring if you didn't have anything to do.

A reporter asked him how he feels about Nacogdoches, to which he simply stated: "I love it."

Funeral arrangements are pending with Laird Funeral Home.