



Paul Hirai

July 21, 1929 - August 31, 2021

Paul Hirai of Moses Lake, WA passed away on Tuesday, August 31, 2021 at the age of 92. Paul died peacefully with his beloved wife Ginny and his family by his side.

Paul was born in Wapato, WA on July 21, 1929 to Daizo and Kiyoe Hirai. He was the youngest of four siblings. Paul married Ginny Matsusaka November 26, 1955 in Seattle, WA. They are the proud parents of three daughters, Patty Laughery (John), Nancy Hirai (Ed Parsons) and Susan Hirai (Mike Rosa); five grandchildren, Jason, Melissa, Zachary, Lindsay and Ashley and great grandchildren Aila, Keira, Ella, Nyomi and Julian.

Paul was a member of the National Guard and graduated from Officer Candidate School in Fort Benning, GA. He was honorably discharged in 1964 as a reserve commissioned officer with the rank of captain.

Paul lived and farmed with his brothers in Nyssa, Oregon and moved to Moses Lake in 1960. He and his partner Harry Masto farmed about 2,000 acres, and owned and operated a packing and shipping warehouse until Paul retired in 1993.

Paul became a Rotarian in 1972. In 1985, Paul traveled with Pete DeVries to Yonezawa, Japan to discuss the formation of a sister city relationship between the two Rotary clubs.

Paul was involved in the Grant County Economic Development Council.

In 2010 Paul was selected as one of the first inductees into the Moses Lake Chamber's Ag Hall of Fame.

He was a board member of the Washington Potato Growers Association from 1975 – 1981. In 2015, he was honored with the Industry Leadership Award. Washington state Governor John Spellman appointed Paul as a trustee of Big Bend Community College in 1982. He served in that capacity for 17 years; also serving on the BBCC Foundation board until 2020.

In 2013 Big Bend Community College dedicated the new Fine Arts Building in his name. In 1999 Paul was honored to receive the medal “Zuihosho” from the Emperor of Japan.

In 2020, the Big Bend Community College Board of Trustees granted Paul, Emeritus status.

He has been active with the Yonezawa-Moses Lake Sister City committee almost from its inception.

Paul began funding the Paul Hirai Family Scholarship in 2015. The scholarship is awarded to agriculture majors, students of farm families or students with family members whose employment is related to agriculture.

In lieu of flowers the family ask that donations be made to the Paul Hirai Family Scholarship Fund at Big Bend Community College Foundation, 7662 Chanute Street NE, Moses Lake.

Celebration of Life ceremony will be held at 2:00 pm on Saturday, September 18, 2021 at the Paul Hirai Fine Arts Building at Big Bend Community College.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

SEP **18.** 2:00 PM.

Big Bend Community College

Tribute Wall

BB

“ *It was truly an honor for us to call Paul a friend. He had such a quiet, yet giant presence. He will be missed by our entire community. We send our deepest heartfelt condolences.*
Bob and Sharon Bernd

Bob Bernd - September 18, 2021 at 01:09 PM

YH

“ *3 files added to the album Memories Album*



Yoshinori & Hideko Haruna - September 18, 2021 at 11:18 AM

RH

“ *I met Paul and Ginny when our oldest sone Shane was interviewing to go on the Sister City Exchange program. Two years later our daughter Amy also went on the exchange. It was our privilege as parents to attend not once but twice the classes Paul and Ginny lead teaching some basic Japanese language and customs prior to their trips. And we as a family, were also a part of fund raisers and the activities with the Students visiting from Japan. I became involved with the Sister City Organization and served on the board with the Hirai's. It was an honor to know Paul and work with him.*
Renae Hall

Renae Hall - September 14, 2021 at 10:45 PM

ME

“ So sorry for your loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family.
Enokizono family



makoto enokizono - September 13, 2021 at 12:39 AM

“ Ginny and Family, it's difficult to begin memories of Paul without a huge hug. While the pandemic has made that more difficult, we'll need to rely on heartfelt words. Oh my, Paul was such a visionary leader, conservative yes, but ready to jump on board at a moment's notice. He did that in 1995 when he and the rest of the BBCC Trustees boarded a Lear Jet and spent a day on my Northern Nevada College campus in Elko, visiting with community leaders, college staff, and of course students. On their return to Moses Lake that evening I was offered the position of President of BBCC, and so began a seventeen year BBCC journey with my good friend, my advisor, my coach, Paul Hirai.

During my first month on campus, staying in the college dormitories, Paul drove me all over Moses Lake to help me find a place to live. I have lived in that home for more than 26 years!

What I shared with him about community college and higher education, he more than reciprocated with a view of the goodness of people everywhere. Ginny and Paul took me on my first, of what would become 5 visits, to Japan on JATP business, and helped me appreciate and understand a new culture. He and Ginny always made me feel that I was traveling with my family.

Paul was a guiding force on the Board for 17 years and then continued to serve on the BBCC Foundation Board. His energy helped to grow community awareness of the value of the college. Many of the substantial gifts to the college were the result of Paul's tireless efforts. Perhaps the most visible being that of the Masto family whose contributions in support of students was the naming of the Masto Conference Center in the ATEC Building on the BBCC campus. I am so pleased that the Board of Trustees honored these efforts with the naming of the beautiful Fine Arts Building for Paul.

Paul was not only a fund raiser and outspoken supporter of the college, he also seemed to be a part of the grounds crew, delivering fund-raising auction items, setting up and taking down displays and

furniture. I observed to Paul, when moving into the house he helped me locate, that there is a very small back yard and I will need to look for a small push mower. Two days later he delivered one that he found, collected \$25 from me and paid it to the original owner. No task or gift was ever too small or insignificant to escape his attention.

I am so grateful to have been able to share a small part of the lifetime of gifts he has given to our community.

Paul, rest in peace, and with pride in what you have given your family and community.

Bill Bonaudi - September 10, 2021 at 07:32 PM

NS

“ *Susan and family, I am so sorry for the loss of your father.
NikieAnn Smith (Mandelas)*

NikieAnn Smith - September 10, 2021 at 09:17 AM

AP

“ *Ginny and family,
My thoughts and prayers are with all of you. Paul was one of those people that once you meet him you never forget him. He definitely earned his star in heaven. I remember sharing the table with you at the Ag Hall of Fame dinner and also sharing the ride in the pickup in the Agriculture Parade that December. It was a special time. May Paul Rest in Peace after a lifetime of serving people.
May God Bless You All. Alice Parker*

Alice Parker - September 08, 2021 at 12:06 PM

SJ

“ Sue Jones lit a candle in memory of Paul Hirai



Sue Jones - September 07, 2021 at 03:47 PM

JB

“ Joe Berninger lit a candle in memory of Paul Hirai



Joe Berninger - September 07, 2021 at 11:44 AM

JB

“ Paul was a dear friend and founding member of the Guatemala Literacy Project, a global network of Rotarians fighting illiteracy in Guatemala. The GLP started with just a few clubs, including Paul’s club, Moses Lake Rotary, and has grown into a service powerhouse involving over 650 Rotary clubs and serving over 50,000 impoverished children.

Paul reached out to me by phone in 1997, saying that he was just finishing a cleft lip project in Columbia, and was looking for another cause to support. I gratefully accepted his offer, not knowing that I’d just fallen into the honey pot. Paul was a charismatic Rotary connector, who soon began promoting the idea to clubs in his district. “They would see me coming, ♦♦♦ he said, “They’d chuckle and ask ‘how much?’” That first year Paul raised nearly \$30,000, from about 10 clubs, combined with district and RI matching funds. This put books into the hands of over a thousand impoverished children.

The next year, Paul and his wife, Ginny, joined us in Guatemala for the very first Rotary Tour – which included just 4 Rotarians. All the others had been scared off, by the Travelers Advisory.

In Guatemala, I remember telling Paul one day: “We have six schools that need books delivered to them today.” I was going to have Rotarians deliver to 3 and staff deliver to the remaining 3. Paul said, “No, we’re Rotarians, we can do this.” And we worked until nearly midnight delivering to all six schools. A farmer for most of his life, Paul was as rough and tough as they come. Nothing stopped him from going the extra mile to put Service Above Self.

Paul loved children. He understood from his own experiences, and those of his family, the transformative power of education. Paul fought tirelessly for nearly 20 years to provide books, computers, training for teachers, and scholarships for children in Guatemala. He has contributed to a significant reduction in the rate of illiteracy in Guatemala, and the teachers he has helped train will instruct over 2

million children in their careers. Paul has truly changed the world for the better. He was a warrior for the poor and we will miss him greatly.

Joe Berninger - September 07, 2021 at 11:43 AM

TB

“ *Todd Bihne lit a candle in memory of Paul Hirai*



Todd Bihne - September 05, 2021 at 05:18 PM



“ *Paul was the consummate gentleman and community advocate. Retirement only gave Paul & Ginny more time to serve. Thank you so much for the legacy you leave Paul. The foundations you have left will serve this community for years to come. It was always a pleasure to see you at fundraisers and other community events, you and Ginny always brought a smile to our face! Love you friend!*

Chuck Yarbro - September 04, 2021 at 12:49 PM

P(

“ *I did not know Paul Hirai, personally, but have heard many great things about him, sending my deepest sympathy to his wife, family and friends.*



*Pat Ledbetter
Moses Lake, Wa.*

Patricia (Gerber)Ledbetter - September 03, 2021 at 06:34 PM