

## Vernon Baltus

Nominated by Julie Bertram, granddaughter

Vernon "Vern" Baltus was born August 25, 1928 in Marshfield, the son of Frank and Hazel (Specht) Baltus. He attended St. John's Catholic School and graduated from Marshfield Senior High. He served his country proudly in the US Navy during WWII as a Petty Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> Class. Vern's assignments included: Shore duty- Bureau of Medicine & Surgery, Washington DC; Sea Duty- Atlantic & Mediterranean aboard the USS Aldebaran.



In 1943, while still in high school at Marshfield Senior High, Vernon started working at the family business owned by his father. This business, purchased in 1927, was a small gas station named the Home Service Station. After Vern returned from service in World War II, he provided leadership and understanding of the growing petroleum market which led to the expansion and diversification of the business. Vern eventually took over the business, which in 1973 was renamed the Baltus Oil Company Inc.

From the small full-service stations of the 1950s, the model changed to self-service with convenience stores added later. Vern Baltus led the way, opening the city's first automated full service car wash in 1962. Under his direction, the Baltus Service Center was built. A few years later, the Baltus car wash was built, one of the first automatic car washes developed in the northern half of Wisconsin. His company was named Firm of the Year in 1981, an accomplishment he acknowledged with sincere gratitude.

In 1982, the first of several Bread and Butter Shop convenience stores opened. In the early 90's, the Baltus Service Center and Express Lube opened. Vernon was a pioneer of the petroleum industry throughout the city of Marshfield and other surrounding areas in Central Wisconsin.

Few businesses manage to survive to serve a third generation, but following Vern's retirement in 1992, his sons John and Frank took over the family business. Vern's philosophy was "If you take care of the customer and do a better job than the competition, you will always be successful," and it was a business plan his sons continued to follow.

In addition to his tireless work in the petroleum industry, Mr. Baltus was extremely involved in community events and philanthropy. Causes dear to Vern were; Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church, the Marshfield Clinic research foundation, and Ministry Saint Joseph's Hospital Foundation. Vern was a member of Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church, where he served as Parish Council President, Lector, and as a Member of the Holy Name Society. Vern also served

as President of Columbus High School Education Foundation, was a member of the American Legion Post 54, the Elks Club, Knights of Columbus Fr. John Eisen Council #1799, as well as Past President of Marshfield Rotary Club where he received the Paul Harris Fellow Award and Service Above Self Award.

Mr. Baltus also served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of St. Joseph's Hospital, was the first President of the Foundation of St. Joseph's Hospital, Vice-President of the Marshfield Medical Research Foundation, as well as Vice-Chairman of the Board of M&I Central Bank & Trust. In addition, he served as a board member of the Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and was President of both Greater Marshfield Inc., and the City of Marshfield Board of Appeals.

Vern was not only a successful businessman and strong advocate for community service, he was a loving and generous patriarch of the Baltus family. Vern married Clara Stadler in 1951 and they had ten children. He was involved to a great extent in each of their lives, being a mentor and teacher to each of them.

Vern was very proud to be a member of such a wonderful community. He dedicated over four decades of his life to help Marshfield prosper.

Vernon Baltus died on December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014, leaving quite a legacy for his family as well as leaving his mark on the community of Marshfield in so many ways.