



Charles Brenner, last co-founder of famous bakery, dies at 92



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The last surviving co-founder of the Brenner Brothers Bakery and Delicatessen, an Eastside mainstay for decades, died Tuesday. He was 92.

By [Lark Turner](#)

In the Brenner family, children went through three stages: crawl, walk and work.

That's how the family ran its business, which ultimately became the Brenner Brothers Bakery and Delicatessen and lasted for more than 90 years.

The famous bakery was a mainstay in the Jewish community and for decades offered sweet pastries, kosher meats and reliably baked loaves of perfectly browned rye to customers who lined up at the store, first in Seattle's Central Area and later in Bellevue.

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The last surviving co-founder of Brenner Brothers, Charles Brenner, died Tuesday of natural causes. He was 92.

Mr. Brenner, who went by Charlie, was born Dec. 17, 1919. He grew up working for his father and graduated from Garfield High School in 1937. He later served as a medic in World War II, storming Omaha Beach on D-Day.

With brothers Joe and Itsey, both of whom also served in the military, Mr. Brenner founded the bakery and deli in the 1950s. He wasn't much of a baker, even if he did begin making bagels around the time he learned to stand.

Mr. Brenner instead spent his days delivering bread to vendors at Pike Place Market and keeping the store's books.

He seemed to know everyone in Seattle, and they knew him, said his daughter, Betsy Brenner, of Milwaukee, who sometimes accompanied him as he hauled baked goods through the Market.

While he was out making his rounds, his two brothers and sister, Yetta Brenner, of Kirkland, ran the shop. That usually made Mr. Brenner the reluctant referee of family squabbles upon his return, said his son Alan Brenner, of Bellevue, the last owner of the bakery, which closed in 1996.

At one time, the bakery employed about 50 people. It was the essence of a family business — one where, if you weren't technically related to the Brenner brood, it soon came to feel that way, Alan Brenner said.

The bakery was known for the family's generosity. The family hired refugees in need of jobs. A cousin who worked behind the counter for half a century was known to slip day-old cakes to struggling single moms. One brother handed out food to anyone willing to sweep the walk.

“Our father told us you could never lose by helping someone out,” Mr. Brenner told a Seattle Times reporter in 1985. “We were raised that way. It’s our honor and pleasure to help someone out.”

Mr. Brenner was married twice: to Lee Schlosser Brenner in 1950 and, after her death in 1969, to Beatrice Lentzer Gold Brenner, who died in 1991. Family and his Jewish faith were important to Mr. Brenner, one of eight children. In the early 1990s, when Alan Brenner was in the midst of a divorce, he and his two daughters moved in with his father.

“Grandpa was always there, waiting by the phone,” said Ashley Brenner, who remembered him picking her up from school and serving as something of a taxi driver for her, her sister and her friends.

In later years, Mr. Brenner could often be seen shopping for necessities at his favorite stores or walking around his Bellevue neighborhood, easy to distinguish by his favorite World War II veteran’s hat.

In addition to siblings Yetta Brenner and Mark Brenner, of Surprise, Ariz., as well as children Alan Brenner and Betsy Brenner, Mr. Brenner is survived by stepchildren Stephanie Gold Kirschenbaum, Darlene Gold Fague and Paul Gold, as well as grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Services for Mr. Brenner are scheduled for 11 a.m. Friday in Shoreline’s Herzl Memorial Park, 16500 Dayton Ave. N.

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Information from The Seattle Times archives is included in this report.

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