

## Iowa's Notable Dead . . .

---

JOHN L. HILLMAN, retired college president and clergyman, died at Wesley Acres, Des Moines, July 13, 1957; born in Licking county, Ohio, July 8, 1865; son of Thomas R. and Phoebe A. (Green) Hillman; married Lizzie L. Howes, of Massachusetts; received his bachelor's degree from Ohio Wesleyan, Delaware, Ohio, in 1886 and his bachelor of sacred theology from Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, in 1889; was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, honorary scholastic fraternity, at Ohio Wesleyan; also had honorary doctor of divinity degrees from Wesleyan and Baldwin Wallace College, Berea, Ohio; LL.D. from College of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Washington; and L.H.D. from Simpson College, Indianola; of the honors accorded him, Dr. Hillman had said he was most pleased that about 30,000 persons had joined the Methodist church where he served during his active ministry; was a close friend of the late President Warren G. Harding, who assisted when Dr. Hillman joined the Masonic lodge, Mrs. Harding an attendant at Epworth Methodist church in Marion, Ohio, when Dr. Hillman was pastor there, the Harding and Hillman families living across the street from each other in Marion; after the Marion pastorate also enjoyed a successful ministry at Youngstown, Ohio; came to Iowa from the Youngstown church, then the fourth largest in Methodism; served First Methodist church in Des Moines from 1912 to 1917, the \$212,000 youth wing of the church, opened in 1955, being named Hillman Hall in honor of the former pastor; went to Toledo, Ohio, as minister for two years before becoming president of Simpson College at Indianola; also had charges in Columbus and Cleveland, Ohio, and in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; while president of Simpson from 1919 to 1936, the administration building was erected and the endowment nearly doubled; as president there, granted the late Dr. George Washington Carver, Negro scientist, his first honorary degree; also was a friend of Dr. Carver and an authority on his work; retired from Simpson at the age of 70, but continued there for some months as professor of the Bible; was an executive committee member of the Methodist Publishing House; a member of the University senate, in charge of church colleges; and chairman of several committees in the North Central Association of Colleges and Universities; a director of the Home Federal Savings and Loan Association, a member of the Blue lodge Masons and Consistory and an honorary member of the Indianola Rotary club; also had been president of the Iowa Anti-Saloon

League and an executive committee member of the national league; surviving are two sons, Dr. Paul M. Hillman, minister of Asbury Methodist church, Des Moines, and John W. Hillman, editor of the *Evansville (Ind.) Courier*; and three daughters, Mrs. Horace T. Lavelly, Nashville, Tenn.; Mrs. Alice H. Sanders, director of health services of the Milwaukee County Community Welfare Council, Milwaukee, Wis.; and Mrs. Helen H. Fischer, a teacher in Oak Park, Ill.; also 11 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren.

---

GEORGE EDWARD CROTHERS, lawyer, former judge and philanthropist, died at Stanford university hospital, San Francisco, May 16, 1957; born at Wapello, Louisa county, Iowa, May 27, 1870; son of John and Margaret Jane (Fair) Crothers; mother a sister of the late Senator James G. Fair; lived on Iowa farms until 13, then moved to San Jose, California; received his A.B. at Stanford university in 1895 and his A.M. in 1896; married Elizabeth, daughter of the late W. H. Mills, of San Francisco, March 23, 1911, who died August 18, 1920; classmate of former President Herbert Hoover in the first graduating class at Stanford in 1895, and was the first alumnus to become a member of the university's board of trustees; elected to the board in 1902, was responsible for setting a ten-year term for trustees; received a law degree at Stanford a year after his graduation; began practice with his brother, Thomas C. Crothers, and was appointed to the superior court seven years later; was elected in 1914 and resumed private practice at the end of his term; was sole trustee of the \$6,000,000 trust that Mrs. Leland Stanford provided should go to the university through him upon her death; one of the attorneys of record for the Fair trustees during protracted litigation, 1899-1902; had personal charge of forgery branch of Fair estate litigation; jointly with brother wrote and caused to be passed by legislature, 1899, and by people, 1900, amendment to state constitution enabling the correction of defects in the organization and grants of Stanford university and the perfecting of its title; also several acts of legislature to the same end; represented Mrs. Stanford and trustees in amendment, confirmation and legal construction of university grants; one of five trustees of Stanford Kindergarten Trust; honorary trustee San Francisco Boys' Club, Inc.; donor of Crothers Hall, a dormitory for advanced law students and also installed in the dormitory a law library of about 6,000 books at Stanford in 1948; contributed funds to erect a dormitory in 1954; president General Alumni Association, Stanford, 1899-1900 and 1913-14; a member of the American Historical Association, California Historical Society, American Law Institute, American Political Science Association, National Municipal League,

Seismological Society of America, Sigma Nu, Phi Delta Phi, Schoolmasters' Club of California; chairman Independent Republicans, San Francisco, 1909-12, and Republican County Committee 1912-13; an Episcopalian and a member of the following clubs: University, Pacific Union, Monterey Peninsula, Menlo Country; author of booklets: "Outline of the Founding of the Leland Stanford Junior University" and "The Educational Ideals of Jane Lathrop Stanford."

---

NORMAN ISAAC MENZER, retired merchant and civic leader, died at Creston, Iowa, May 25, 1957; born in Lithuania in 1883, came to America as an immigrant boy with his parents when five years of age, his family locating in 1889, at Fontanelle, Iowa, where they launched a mercantile business, the old Menzer store still being operated; orphaned by death of his father when a boy of 10, entered the store as a helper and upon graduating from high school joined the store force with his mother full time in 1904, and joining with his brother-in-law, Sam Friedman, later purchased the business, then operating it as partners until 1929; married Henriette Landau, July 7, 1920, and removed to Creston in 1929, when he acquired the Strass drygoods store, which was sold in 1934, and launched a women's ready-to-wear store there; suffered a heavy loss by a terrific fire in 1942, that swept the whole business section of east Maple street, but rebuilt and continued as one of Creston's leading business houses, later also operating stores in Chariton, Centerville and Atlantic, assisted by his son, Calman Menzer and others of the Menzer family; retired in 1953 after 54 years in business; took leading part in community affairs, in the chamber of commerce, a past president of the Rotary club and of the Salvation Army board of directors, a director of the First National bank, a 33rd degree Mason, an Elk; active in untold community enterprises, including Red Cross drives, Boy Scout programs, the United Fund campaigns and USO activities; honored many times by the community for public-spirited generosity to the needy and unfortunate; survived by his widow and two children, Calman Menzer of Los Angeles, and Mrs. Mary Jane Solomon of Boston, two sisters and five grandchildren.

---

FRANK B. HALLAGAN, lawyer, former judge, legislator, soldier and public official, died at Des Moines, Iowa, July 2, 1957; born in Franklin county, Illinois, August 16, 1889; educated in the public schools and Valparaiso university, Valparaiso, Indiana, and received his law degree from that institution in 1914; had served in Company F, 23rd U. S. infantry from 1907 in the Philippine Islands and the Mexican border; married Pearle Kirkpatrick of Royalton, Illinois, July 6, 1914, and moved to

Des Moines that year, becoming general counsel for the National Life Insurance association; during World War I was an instructor in the officers' training school at Camp Lee, Virginia; returned to Iowa, to practice of law as general counsel for the Merchant's Life Insurance company; appointed judge of the Des Moines municipal court, serving in 1927-28; during World War II was chief legal officer of selective service in Iowa, retiring shortly after the end of the war with the rank of brigadier general; represented Polk county in the Iowa house of representatives in 1939; during period of martial law in Iowa served as special assistant attorney general and aid to civil authorities; was Des Moines corporation counsel under Mayor Heck Ross; was grand patron of the Eastern Star in 1928 and 1929 and head of the Des Moines consistory in 1946; also was a member of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and College Avenue Christian church; in recent years was associated in law firm with James P. Irish and Berry O. Burt in the law firm of Hallagan, Irish and Burt; survivors include his widow, Pearle, and a daughter, Mrs. William Marks, Jr., both of Des Moines; a brother, Harvey of Bloomington, Illinois, and a sister, Mrs. Charles Sursa, Carbondale, Illinois.

---

COL. CHARLES ROSS GREENING, USAF, survivor of the World War II raid on Tokyo and one of the war's most colorful heroes, died at Bethesda Naval hospital at Washington, D.C., March 29, 1957; born at Carroll, Iowa, in 1915, and after removal to Tacoma, Washington, became a star athlete there and a fine arts graduate in 1936 from Washington State College, Pullman, Washington; enlisted in the Air Corps in 1937, the year he married Dorothy Watson; as an Air Corps captain was credited by the then Col. James (Jimmy) Doolittle with designing a 20-cent bombsight for the 1942 attack on Tokyo so that no secret bombsight would fall into enemy hands; was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Silver Star; the flight commander who successfully dodged the enemy in Asia, North Africa and Italy succumbed to endocarditis, a heart lining inflammation; praying for his recovery from this 2-year illness were many residents of five towns in northern Italy, where he was shot down and eluded German troops for more than a year; grateful to residents of Masarolis, Italy, and other villages, who risked their lives to help him hide from German troops, he was arranging economic aid for them at the time of his death; despite their efforts to hide him, was captured, then recaptured after an escape, and sent for the remainder of the war to Stalag Luft 1, a prison camp in Germany; helped his fellow captives meet prison hardships by teaching them to paint and work with their hands; moved to Washington in 1949 for several Pentagon assignments;

in 1955 was sent to Australia as an air attache, but returned last July after he became ill; surviving are his widow and two sons, Allan Ross, 9, and Charles William, 7, all of 6413 Winnipeg road, Bethesda, and his mother, Mrs. Carlile Kenyon of Bozeman, Montana.

---

CHARLES C. BOYSEN, publisher of *Washington Post*, soldier and former U. S. official, died at Washington, D.C., July 7, 1957; born at Cedar Falls, Iowa, February 10, 1885; son of Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Boyesen; graduated from the local high school and attended Iowa State College at Ames in the electrical engineering school; after graduation went with Iowa National Guard unit in 1916 to the Mexican border, and promoted from first sergeant to second lieutenant; saw combat in France in World War I as a U. S. infantry captain; after war, assisted in management of Cedar Falls power plant and in 1922 went with the U. S. Bureau of Internal Revenue in Iowa and later with the Federal Land bank in this area; one of the organizers of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, in association with Eugene Meyer; went to the *Washington Post*, in 1933 as assistant treasurer when the newspaper was purchased by Mr. Meyer; progressed through the positions of assistant comptroller, comptroller and circulation director before becoming business manager in 1943; was closely identified with the expansion of the *Post* during the past two decades and was chiefly responsible for labor negotiations until his resignation last February as secretary of the Washington Post Company when illness made it necessary for him to limit his activities, but continued as a director and also managed newsprint supply matters; was a member of the Rotary club and the Congressional Country club; was a past director of the National Capital Area Council of Boy Scouts; married Irene Stevens at Cedar Falls in 1922, who survives with a daughter, Mrs. Jaques J. Helbronner of Toronto, and two brothers, Paul at Jesup, Iowa, and John at Kansas City, also three sisters, Mrs. Harry Aelman of Cedar Falls, Catherine Ransom and Mrs. Earl Moothart, both of Waterloo, Iowa.

---

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN BUTLER, lawyer and former Iowa district judge, was fatally injured in an automobile accident near Waterloo, Iowa, his home, June 13, 1957, and died early the following morning; born near Vinton, Benton county, Iowa, February 20, 1887; only child of John M. and Ellen Correll Butler; attended public schools at Muscatine where he grew up, received degrees at the State University of Iowa, his B.A. in 1910 and his LL.B. in 1912; opened a law office at Sibley, Osceola county, Iowa, and served as mayor of Sibley and county attorney; elected and served as district judge there from

1926 to 1930; married Alice Webb of Sibley November 10, 1915, and they moved to Waterloo in 1930, and at time of death he was a member of the law firm of Pike, Sias, Butler and Hoxie; a member of the Presbyterian church, a veteran of World War I, a member of the Blackhawk county, Iowa State and American Bar Associations, the Kiwanis club, the Moose, the BPOE, St. Ignatius Conclave of the Red Cross of Constantine at Cedar Rapids, and of the advisory council of Region No. 8 Boy Scouts of America, covering a six-state area, a 32 degree Mason and past grand treasurer of the Grand Lodge of Mason of Iowa, and past president of the Waterloo Chamber of Commerce and of the Waterloo Symphony Concert association; survived by his widow, one son, Wallace W. Butler, a member of his law firm, and six grandchildren, another son Lawrence B. Butler having preceded him in death in 1953.

---

MABLE RITTGERS GENSO, Presbyterian missionary and religious teacher in Korea and Japan, died in Washington, D. C., June 27, 1957; born on a farm east of Grimes in Polk county, Iowa, April 5, 1882, daughter of R. R. and Abigail Rittgers, the tenth of thirteen children; following teaching in the Polk county schools for a period, went to Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and received further education and training in Christian Education and Social Service work; entered service of Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in 1908 and went to Korea as principal of the Chung Sin school for girls in Seoul; two years later married John Frederick Genso, young business manager of the Korean mission, who went to Korea upon the same boat; carried many mission assignments during intervening period to 1941, some advisory, others in mission field with personal workers; returned to Chicago during World War II, and in 1947 permitted to return to Korea, entering the greatest work of her career organizing the activities of the Korean adult literary campaign devoted to training adult educated Koreans for teaching; during the invasion period, the Gensos returned to Japan, Mrs. Genso being reassigned to Korea in 1954 this time by Literary Committee of the Presbyterian church to reactivate the literacy activity in Korea, Mr. Genso having passed away in 1950 in Kobe, Japan; surviving are two daughters, Gail Kinney, 2251 N. Vermont street, Arlington, with whom Mrs. Genso lived since last September, and Dr. Barbara Gisla of San Mateo; nine grandchildren and six brothers and sisters.

---

GOTTFRED A. SMEDAL, clergyman and pension system executive, died at Roland, Iowa, June 22, 1957; born at Mundal, Kristiansand, Norway, September 20, 1861; received his bachelor of arts, doctor of philosophy and divinity degrees from the University

of Kristiania, Oslo, Norway; taught in various schools in Norway and married in that country; with his bride, Agnes Henriette Storake, came in 1889 to Ridgeway, Iowa, his first pastorate, followed by others at Forest City, Lake Mills and Leland; moved to Roland in 1895, when he became pastor of the Bergen Lutheran church there and continued in that pastorate 26 years; originated the retirement plan for Lutheran ministers after retirement from active ministerial work; was executive secretary of the pension system from 1920 to 1940, living at Minneapolis during this period, and since retirement had served as advisor to the administering board and in many other positions of trust in the Lutheran groups; author of many essays, poems, magazine articles and books, his latest book entitled, "The Historic Reality of Christianity," published in 1956; his wife having died June 28, 1951, the survivors include a daughter, Mrs. Elsie Highland, Roland, and three sons, Carl A. and Olav Smedal, both of Ames, George of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren, two children having previously passed away, a daughter, Agnes, who died at age of two, and a son, Harold, who died in 1944.

---

JOHN HUSTON, veteran newspaperman, died at Ottumwa, Iowa, July 9, 1957; born in Ottumwa, April 3, 1881; eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Chris Huston; after attending the public schools, in 1897 entered the employment of the *Ottumwa Courier* at 16 years of age, progressing from one responsibility until another needed his service, became its publisher in 1928, holding that position at his death; employment with the *Courier* eventually extending to nearly 60 years, longer than that of any other person; active in community affairs, served as a director of the Ottumwa Chamber of Commerce for many years, being president of the chamber in 1932; was Community Chest director in 1932, when it raised more money for Ottumwa charities than ever before or since; a member of the Catholic church and a fourth degree Knights of Columbus; was president of the Iowa Press Association in 1936 and received its master editor—publisher award in 1950; served for three years as director of the Inland Press Association and was active in the affairs of the Associated Press and American Newspaper Publishers Association; was a Republican and served as a delegate to the 1936 national convention in Cleveland, Ohio; married August 24, 1909, to Rose Ella Meany, Ottumwa, who survives with a daughter, Mrs. George Scully, Waterloo; a son, Bernard J. Huston of Ottumwa, and six grandchildren.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.