

May 15, 1994

Canisteo will miss 'preacher's kid'

Paul Vickers Gardner was remembered as a "hometown boy" who went on to become internationally known in the field of glass and ceramics as he was remembered Saturday in one of the communities he loved best - Canisteo.

A memorial service was held in the First United Methodist Church and interment was in Oakwood Cemetery in Nunda. Paul died Good Friday, April 1, at age 85 after being stricken while attending services in the Washington National Cathedral where he was on the building committee.



Dick Peer

His roots were planted firmly in the soil of that area around Canisteo for he had been born Aug. 31, 1908, in Castile, the son of a minister and his wife. While still a child, Paul's father took a pastoral assignment in Canisteo and that's where he grew up as a "preacher's kid," a term he frequently used in referring to himself. There he also graduated from Canisteo Academy. With his allegiance to the Southern Tier, he moved on to further his education at nearby Alfred University and the New York State College of Ceramics.

Paul always talked lovingly of his childhood in Canisteo. Throughout his adult life he maintained a residence there. Everyone knew when he had returned home to visit for they saw him driving his venerable Cadillac around town. Only in recent years was he forced to give it up because it became too difficult to repair.

He was also a frequent visitor to Corning, his second hometown, returning again last fall to attend the annual birthday dinner honoring his mentor, the late **Frederick Carder**, of early Steuben glass fame.

While in his senior year at Alfred University, **Charles Ferguss Binns**, founding director of the

New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred, on request of Carder, recommended Paul as an apprentice. Before he left for the interview that spring of 1930 the dean told Paul, "if you can get that job, take it. It's the greatest job ever offered this school. To say you worked for Fred Carder means more than any degree from any university I know of."

Paul was to remember that when he first encountered Carder. At the interview he found him to be "an awesome man," although short and slight. "I sat in a chair and he handed me a pencil and told me to draw something," recalled Paul. "I don't know what I did draw, but Carder looked at it quickly and said, "you'll do."

Carder wanted Paul, who still had a few months to go to finish college, to start work immediately.

When Paul told him he'd like to complete his degree first, Carder agreed: "Young man, you're perfectly right. I'll hold the job for you until June and pay you more money." When he went back to Alfred after the interview, Paul was to later joke, "I was the fair-haired boy on campus - and I had hair then."

Despite his gruffness, Carder in the ensuing years developed a warm relationship with the young Paul, who perhaps filled a void in the older man's heart left by the death of his son, **Cyril**, during World War I. But when Paul reported for work that summer, the crusty Carder called his new apprentice "a damn Yankee kid who has a long way to go and who won't be worth a damn to me for three years."

As the relationship between the older man and his younger protege grew, Carder would invite him to his house for dinner from time to time. "I was the first Steuben employee to have ever been extended that honor," Paul said in later years. "When I did go I always wore my tuxedo for it was a custom for Mr. and Mrs. Carder to dine formally every evening."

Throughout his years with Carder, Paul was to break only one piece of glass, and that was an

incident which was forever etched in his memory. Late one afternoon Carder brought a fine goblet to Paul to sketch for production work. Since it was nearly quitting time, it was set on Paul's drawing table, which had a slight incline. Overnight the passing Erie Railroad trains shook the building and the table. The goblet fell off and was broken. The next morning when the boss arrived, Paul told him about the breakage. He was furious. He stood looking at the pieces for about 10 seconds, saying nothing, and then snapped, "Glue It!" Paul spent the rest of the day putting the piece back together.

Later when Carder was relieved of his job as managing director of Steuben Glass and became art director for CGW, Paul went along as assistant art director. He worked on many designs for the first Pyrex top-of-stove ware, pressed tableware and ornamental pieces such as the architectural glass panels for the Empire State building and the huge Pyrex panel in the entranceway of the RCA building in Rockefeller Center.

When Paul enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1942, his working relationship with Carder came to an end, but their friendship continued. After the war Paul took his training garnered from a tough taskmaster to greater fields, becoming the first curator of ceramics at the Smithsonian Institution and later curator of ceramics and glass for the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

But he never forgot his ties with Carder and with Corning. In 1971 he created what still remains the classic book on the man and his work, titling it "The Glass of Frederick Carder."

And it is fitting, too, that the work and contributions of Paul to glass and ceramics live on at his beloved alma mater at Alfred U. where earlier this year was established the Paul Vickers Gardner Glass Center to support education in glass art and glass technology.

It encourages other young people to find the same love of the art he did with Fred Carder.