

Bermuda mourns Charles Collis

By Raymond Hailey

The political, legal and international business worlds were plunged into mourning yesterday after the death of ex-Government Senate leader and top lawyer Charles Collis.

Mr. Collis died in the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital on Monday after a short illness.

Premier Pamela Gordon got into politics as a Senator under Mr. Collis, who was then Government Senate Leader.

She said: "It's very shocking news — he made a significant contribution to Bermuda and the political scene and also outside politics just by being part of our society."

Former United Bermuda Party Premier Sir John Sharpe said he first met Charles Collis 40 years ago when the rugby-playing lawyer was on the BAA management committee.

Sir John said: "He was perhaps the most 'can do' person I have known. Whether it was sports administration, business or Government, where others saw a problem Charles would apply his clear thinking and fertile imagination to the solution."

"Everything he did — which was a lot — he did well."

And Sir John credited Mr. Collis with being "a driving force if not the driving force" behind Bermuda's successful foray into the international business sector."

Sir John also paid tribute to Mr. Collis' political savvy, both in Senate and in Cabinet, where he served as Minister without portfolio, Minister of Legislative Affairs and Minister of Telecommunications.

Mr. Collis was appointed Government Senate Leader in 1982, resigning his post a decade later.

He has also served on a num-

ber of Government Boards, including the Bermuda Monetary Authority, the Treatment of Offenders Board and the Development Applications Board.

Mr. Collis was also president of the Bermuda Chamber of Commerce from 1980-82.

Most recently, he took over the chairmanship of the Telecommunications Board following the death of Dr. John Stubbs in 1994, a position he gave up at the start of this year.

Mr. Collis, who was 65, was the senior partner in the law firm of Conyers, Dill and Pearman. He received an OBE in the 1994 Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Sir John said: "He was outstanding in every respect — educated, intelligent, aggressive in pursuit of solutions and socially, he was the most amiable of men."

"But the essence of Charles was, I think, his enthusiasm. Charles Collis has served the legal fraternity, Bermuda, international business and the Country well in every respect. A vibrant life has been snuffed out prematurely."

Legal colleague and friend Nicholas Dill, a senior partner in the same firm, knew Mr. Collis from their schooldays at Saltus Grammar School.

Mr. Dill said: "He is a very considerable loss to the firm. He was involved with a lot of development over the latter years, but also over the whole period of the firm."

"Charles was involved in the international company business and known all over the world — he was a people person... a very bright person and always willing to help others."

Mr. Collis, who lived in Devonshire, was a winner of a coveted Rhodes Scholarship and graduate of Oxford University. He qualified as a barrister in 1956 and



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became a Queen's Counsel in 1992.

He is survived by wife Margaret and three sons, John, Graham and Charles, all of whom followed him into the law and Conyers, Dill and Pearman.

Education Minister and Deputy Premier Jerome Dill, himself a lawyer, said he knew Mr. Collis as a politician who gave sound advice when he became a Senator in 1992 and as a barrister.

Mr. Dill, speaking from Frankfurt where he is conducting a BIBA briefing for German businesspeople, said: "I knew him as a senior member of the bar — he

was the senior partner of Conyers, Dill and Pearman — and I met him as a student."

"I came to respect him a great deal. He was able to provide inspiration and leadership to a lot of Bermudians, both young and older, in the Bermuda legal profession."

"He had the opportunity to serve the UBP, Government and the people of Bermuda, all of which he did very well."

Mr. Collis' funeral service will be held at St. John's Anglican Church, Pembroke, at 4.30 p.m. on Friday. He will be buried in the parish church cemetery.