



JEN JAQUA/SUFFOLK NEWS-HERALD

Memorabilia, candles and Mr. Peanut's iconic cane were among the items set up to memorialize and "shell-eborate" the life of Mr. Peanut at the Planters factory on Wednesday.

Peanut: Famous spokesnut dead in crash

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figure out what will happen with Mr. Peanut," said Peanutter Adrienne "Adri-Almond" Carpenter. "It's one of those things we're all kind of shocked about."

Planters employees also said they had just heard the news.

"It's very traumatic," said Latasha Lawrence, who has worked at the factory for almost two years. "It hurts me to my heart. But his legacy lives on through all of us because he has touched so many of us."

A wreath, candles and Mr. Peanut's iconic cane were part of the memorial set up at the factory.

"I was just trying to get myself up and come to work this morning," said employee Tara Moore, with a note of humor in her voice. "Mr. Peanut's been good to me in my 15 years of working here. I'm interested in seeing what's going to happen."

Mr. Peanut, born right here in Suffolk in 1916, was the spokesnut for Planters Peanuts for 104 years. Planters founder Amedeo Obici needed something to help sell his peanuts, and Antonio Gentile, a young teen in Suffolk's Hall Place neighborhood, produced 11 drawings of a peanut with a face, legs and arms. Obici paid him \$5 for the drawings and had them enhanced by an artist.

Robert Slade, Gentile's nephew, said he learned the news on Wednesday just like everybody else. Slade said he hopes Mr. Peanut will be resurrected at some point.

"He deserves a better fate, even though he was obviously courageous in the way he went," Slade

The Planters Nutmobile will be at the following locations this week with commemorative pins to pay tribute to Mr. Peanut, while supplies last. The full schedule is available at plantersnutmobile.com.

Thursday

- ▶ Walmart, 1170 N. Military Highway, Norfolk, noon to 2 p.m.
- ▶ Walmart, 7530 Tidewater Drive, Norfolk, 3 to 5 p.m.

Friday

- ▶ Walmart, 1098 Frederick Blvd., Portsmouth, noon to 2 p.m.
- ▶ Walmart, 2448 Chesapeake Square Ring Road, Chesapeake, 3 to 5 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday

- ▶ Kroger, 1090 W. Mercury Blvd., Hampton, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

said. Slade noted that Mr. Peanut's legacy, at 104, has stood the test of time, despite many changes in ownership of Planters over the years.

"Mr. Peanut was a creation of a master marketer in Mr. Obici," Slade said. "He used him in every incarnation he could to create continuity and a brand. ... The companies have tried many times

to reinvent him, and it's always failed."

Scott Schmitz, president of the Peanut Pals group of dedicated collectors of all things Mr. Peanut, said he was notified by Planters shortly after midnight on Wednesday that the Super Bowl ad would be released early.

"It's definitely a marketing ploy," Schmitz said. "I am hoping it turns out to be like a telenovela

or a soap opera and we find out a year from now he's been in some hospital in Mexico."

Schmitz said he had also seen the rumors that a third-quarter Super Bowl commercial would feature the spokesnut's funeral.

"We are saddened by the loss of Mr. Peanut," Schmitz said. "At least he died helping his friends — 104 is a pretty ripe old age to live, even if you are a peanut."

Schmitz said the Peanut Pals will be at the Suffolk Art League's annual Antiques Show and Sale Feb. 22-23 at King's Fork Middle School and will be available to accept condolences. They'll be buying and selling Mr. Peanut memorabilia and are curious to see how this plays out, Schmitz said.

Details on the crash — including when and where it happened and the fate of Walsh and Snipes — were unavailable at press time.

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JEN JAQUA/SUFFOLK NEWS-HERALD

Planters Peanut employee Latasha Lawrence was among the mourners at the Planters factory in downtown Suffolk on Wednesday. The company announced the death of its spokesnut, Mr. Peanut, in a tragic accident.

Mr. Peanut, Suffolk native, dead at 104

BY TRACY AGNEW
EDITOR

Mr. Peanut, an internationally known marketing icon and Suffolk native, died Wednesday after courageously sacrificing himself for his friends after a tragic accident. He was 104.

The official social media pages of Mr. Peanut confirmed the death Wednesday. They

showed footage of the crash in mountainous terrain, with the Nutmobile swerving to avoid an armadillo and tossing Mr. Peanut, Matt Walsh and Wesley Snipes off the side of the cliff.

As the three maintain a precarious grip on a branch, it begins to crack, and Mr. Peanut lets go to save his friends. After he lands in the wreckage of the Nutmobile, an explosion

sends his iconic top hat flying.

“We know that this news is painful and shocking to our fans,” said Samantha Hess, Planters brand manager at Kraft Heinz. “Mr. Peanut will be remembered as the legume who always brought people together for nutty adventures and a good time. We will be honoring him with a funeral during the Super Bowl and encourage all fans to join in

and celebrate his life.”

The Nutmobile was at the Planters Peanuts factory in Suffolk on Wednesday treating employees and passersby to cupcakes and special, commemorative pins to “shell-eborate” his life.

“As of right now, we really don’t know much, except to tune in to the Super Bowl to

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