



Donald G. Kaiser

April 1, 1930 - April 9, 2020

Born April 1, 1930 in Louisville, KY, to Edward F. Kaiser and Clarice Bachus Kaiser, Donald Gavin Kaiser, a loving husband, father, grandfather, brother and uncle, passed away peacefully at the age of 90 in Sarasota, FL. He was married to the love of his life, Cynthia S. Kaiser, for over 35 years, before her death in 2003.

Known to his family and wide circle of friends as Coach, Don will be fondly remembered as a charismatic gentleman who loved his family, teammates, colleagues and pupils; believed in people's potential even when they did not believe in themselves; passionately competed for important causes or for sport; and, brought laughter to our world.

Don's true passion and joy was tennis. He first picked up a racquet at 9, and from there he ran the gamut. As a player, while a student at Male High School, he won two Kentucky singles championships in a row and a state high school doubles crown; from there received a scholarship to the University of Miami, where he was team captain and part of its national championship team; played on the National Junior Davis Cup Team grass-court circuit; became the Alabama and Kentucky state singles champion; twice won national father/son championships; and, was rated as high as 21st in the nation in open singles. Don then joined the Army as a communication specialist stationed in Europe, where he won the All Army titles in both singles and doubles. And, as much to spite his age, Don's love to compete resulted in him being ranked No. 1 in singles in the state of Florida/Top 10 nationally in the 50s, 55s, 60s and 65s. A newspaper clip from the 1950s captured his dominance by saying "he would run his opponents into submission, covering the court like a cat and returning ball after ball until the guy on the other side got too tired to hit another shot."

After the Army, Don began his teaching career. It started in the parks, directing the highly successful summer clinics sponsored by the city and Kentucky Tennis Patrons Foundations. Hundreds of children took part, and that led to the Louisville Country Club, where he taught a number of juniors that went on to pro careers. For ten years, from 1958-67, Don coached the University of Louisville tennis team. Moving onto Florida in

1968, Don started at Barlett Park, which later became the St. Petersburg Tennis Center. Don began marketing the center by holding professional tournaments, something he would do repeatedly, at each stop along the way. He moved to Treasure Island as the director and head pro. For 16 years, Don built and ran the tennis program at Shipwatch in Indian Springs. While there, Don started the Suncoast Women's Tennis League. He completed his coaching career at Club Longboat in Sarasota. As a coach, he was a great tease, a master of one-upmanship, and he could leave almost anyone sputtering for a rejoinder. Over a 50-year career, he hit ball after ball, to student after student, spreading enthusiasm while never seeming to tire. Win or lose, tennis with Don Kaiser was fun before anything else. In 1986, in recognition of all his major achievements toward the game, he was inducted into the Kentucky Tennis Hall of Fame.

An animal lover, Don was owned by several canine and feline friends, not to mention a rather varied assortment of other pets he adored immensely. He was a proud Sigma Alpha Epsilon; always quick with a joke; an avid, but not so good fisherman; loved to travel; treasured time with his family and friends; and, above all else, relished any excuse to celebrate and have a good time. He was and forever will be the life of the party.

Don was predeceased by his wife, Cynthia S. Kaiser. He is survived by his step-sons: John Babcock (Cynthia), Jeffrey Babcock (Brenda), and Peter Babcock (Lynn); sister, Bonnie (Scott); grandchildren Phil Babcock (Jane), Doug Babcock, Lea Babcock Wallace (Jarryd), Grace Babcock, Ian Babcock and Addie Babcock; nieces and nephews Scott Beard, Laura Beard, Craig Beard (Stacy) and Royce Horne; great grand children Levi Wallace and Wheeler Babcock; great nieces/nephews Henry and Eliza Beard, Graycen and Gavin Horne.

A celebration of life will be held at a later date. He is interred at Serenity Gardens in Largo, FL.

Comments



“ I'm sorry for the lateness of this post. I will miss Don as he was one of my first tennis coaches as a kid...we had many great coaches in the area and Don was among them.

In recent times Don would make a point of coming to watch my matches in national senior tournaments in Sarasota and was always so very supportive...I always wanted to play well for him. I very much wish to be there for any memorial celebration when it can be planned. Jeff Davis

Jeff Davis - May 07, 2020 at 09:49 AM



“ Don was always enthusiastic and brought a smile to everyone. First met him at Bartlett Park in St. Petersburg 1968 when he called the Notre Dame tennis coach and got me a scholarship. A couple of us also stayed at his house in Louisville that summer for a national 18's tournament. Also Don and I played the finals of a club tournament and he always always reminded me we had one point that went 287 shots which was a record for him and I've never hit more than three in a row over the net before that. Last time he reminded me of that number when I played a Sarasota seniors tournament five years ago and was fortunate that he came by to see his old friends. Will all miss him! Mike Reilly

Michael Reilly - May 04, 2020 at 06:00 PM



“ My husband Frank grew up with Don and George Babcock (Cynthia's first husband). Frank was a groomsman in George and Cynthia's wedding in 1953 in California and then we attended Don and Cynthia's wedding in 1975.

Cynthia and I were good friends and we kept in touch even after they left Louisville. Frank and I visited Don and Cynthia every year after they moved to Sarasota, Florida, renting a condo nearby.

Don and Cynthia were so happy together. He was such a loving husband and stepfather. When Cynthia became sick, he kept her happy and cared for her in a gentle way. He kept the family together after she died.

Every winter, Frank and I looked forward to meeting Don for lunch either on Anna Maria Island or on Longboat Key to catch up on the news about him and the boys. We did this every year until Frank became too ill, eventually dying of cancer in 2017.

Don was a star in tennis and in life ! He played by the rules and was an honest gentleman and an all-around good & nice friend.

Cath Strickler

Catharine Strickler - May 04, 2020 at 12:45 PM



“ Don (coach) changed my life. At 13 he handed me my first tennis racquet and hit me my first ball. From that to UK tennis team #1 singles and doubles, local, Southern, and National tourneys #1 mixed doubles South, #6 National men's dubs, #1 South men's dubs, #1 singles and dubs Kentucky, and 20 years as South Oldham boys High School tennis coach--- all made possible by that first ball from Don. RIP Don---Woody McGraw

woody mcgraw - May 01, 2020 at 10:39 AM



“ 33 files added to the album Don's Life



Craig Beard - April 30, 2020 at 04:44 PM