



Donald Reid Womack Sr.

October 10, 1937 - February 17, 2019

Donald Reid Womack Sr. of Kingsport, TN, a youthful 81, moved on to the next stage of his existence February 17, 2019, after several months of battling pancreatic cancer. While there was never any doubt about who would eventually win the fight (same goes for us all regardless of our own battles, no?), Don nevertheless decided to go out with grace and dignity, and showed us how it's done. Brave and stoic to the end, he was the model we would all like to be when it comes our time. And by "all" we mean us, his family. And probably all of the rest of you too.

He left behind not just us — his wife of 60 years, Judith Dawson Womack of Kingsport; his children Vicki Womack Chase and husband John of Marietta, GA and Donald Reid Womack Jr. and wife Anna of Honolulu, HI; four grandsons, a brother Robert Womack and wife Ruth and their two daughters; as well as an extended family of in-laws — but a legacy of kindness that resonates through his vast network of friends. And also a whole lot of stuff that we'll need to figure out what to do with. Like soon.

Actually — and this is relevant, bear with us — he managed to get rid of a lot of that stuff already. Pretty much from the get go, when his fate revealed itself, he set about unloading all the things he figured he wasn't going to need much longer. The lawn mowers (yes, plural), power washer, more tools than any human (or other species) ever really needs, myriad decades-old stuff that of course was going to get used someday, so you can't throw it away. Out the door, gone, buh bye. This matters because it showed his state of mind at the end, and, indeed, the way he lived his life. Given a finite, and, yeah, not very long, amount of time to remain in corporeal form, he chose to spend it making sure that his family would have as little hassle as he could manage for them. Because he was a thoughtful and caring man.

Born Donald Reid Womack (he didn't become Sr. until Jr. came along much later) October 10, 1937 in New Orleans to parents Vincent "Jack" and Mabel Womack, Don had an adventurous childhood. Moving around for his dad's work, he lived in California and Utah for a time, and returned to Louisiana before finally settling in the metropolis of Wise, VA,

known as the New York City of Southwest Virginia (at least of the stretch between Coeburn and Pennington Gap). He grew up knowing how to get dirty, working on his dad's farm, and, later, at his dad's coal mine. He was – as we're sure he would tell you – a good kid. But he had a bit of a mischievous side too, and his fair share of getting into trouble. Like the time when he and brother Bob decided to put their BB guns to good use by shooting out all the windows of the school bus parked at a nearby home. Yeah, that went over well. (Their dad most definitely tanned their hides, as they used to say.) Or the night when he ended up facing the other end of a gun barrel, as he and his college frat brothers attempted to paint the famous Pratt's Barn Indian statue anatomically correct, only to rouse the less-than-amused owner of the property, who emphatically implored them to — and we quote — “GIT!!”

But, all in all, he brought a lot more good into the world than mischief. Don was a graduate of J.J. Kelly High School, where he was a star tight end on the undefeated football team his senior year. Now, we have to admit, that he wasn't the best player on the team. In fact, he wasn't even the best receiver on the team. But, hey, the other guy went on to become a star for the Green Bay Packers, so cut him some slack.

It was at Emory and Henry College that he met the stunning young Judy, and after a little double date mixup, in which the four young lovebirds weren't quite sure who was dating whom, he managed to convince her that she might as well spend the rest of her life with him. Just like in the fairy tales they soon got busy, and kids Vicki, Wendi and Don Jr. followed in short order.

He stayed busy in other ways too, settling in Big Stone Gap, VA, where he became vice president of Stamack Mining Corporation, president of the Virginia Surface Mining and Reclamation Association, and did just about every community service gig that was available — Big Stone Gap town council and vice mayor of the city, Wise County School Board, President of the Lions Club. He was also a member of the First Baptist Church of Big Stone Gap, and, later, First Baptist Church of Kingsport, TN.

Don knew joy and happiness — the pleasure of playing with his kids, the camaraderie of hunting trips shared with his dad and brother, time spent golfing with friends. He loved golf. And golf loved him back. Believe it or not, he managed seven holes-in-one over the years, which must be some kind of record?! (At the very least it cost him a lot in buying drinks for the entire clubhouse.) He liked to travel, and enjoyed trips to Germany, Mexico, Thailand and Japan. A less exotic, though considerably more raucous destination was to Cocoa Beach, FL, with the infamous Wakulla Gang, so-named after the somewhat less than four-star hotel (can we call it a four-star Motel?) where a group of fun loving, like-

minded families would trek annually for a decade back in the 70s and 80s, in order to spend the week of spring break playing, eating too much, and generally making fools of themselves. These were some of the best moments of his life.

One special joy was the infamous Womack tour, which typically took place on Sunday afternoons. A Womack tour involved driving around aimlessly, usually on roads that sane people go out of their way to avoid. The only requisites for it to be officially considered a Womack tour were, first, that five of us were crammed into a car – usually a sports car designed to hold two and a half people – and second, we got lost, at which he was especially adept. But the joy was finding our way back home, more or less through dead reckoning and blind luck, with the wind in our hair. Maybe he should have been an explorer?

As with us all though, life was a mixed bag, and along with the joys he also knew tragedy, losing his father as a young man in 1969. In a twist of irony, Jack survived a helicopter crash that killed two others aboard, only to die in a car accident just three months later. More recently Don's beloved daughter Wendi passed away in 2013, far too young, leaving a gaping hole in her father's heart.

But, all in all, Don would tell you that he can't complain. Life was kind to him and he made the most of it, sharing it with friends, family, community, and accepting with humility and poise everything it dealt him, good and bad. He has moved on now, and we have asked him to save us a place in Heaven.

We are grateful for neighbors who stepped up to help in his final time of need. We are grateful for our friends at First Baptist Church, his golf buddies and many others who came to sit with him and recount their experiences together. And we are grateful for the caring people of Amedisys Hospice, who made his final transition peaceful and dignified.

OK, just so you don't have to take our word for it as to what a great guy he was, Don's friend Bill Woods wrote to him:

I only hope that when it's my turn I will have the strength to follow your marvelous example. I consider you one of my closest friends. When we first met about twenty years ago, I immediately liked you. There are hundreds of people who would agree that you're an easy man to like and I'll always treasure our friendship! You set a wonderful example of what a true sales professional should be and you certainly were a great mentor! I'm so very grateful for all the things I've learned from you. You are a great father and husband

and it's easy to see that every member of your family loves and respects you. They are very fortunate to have you, and you them. Don, in everything you've ever done you are "as good as the best and much better than the rest". I'll always cherish our time together! Too many tears to continue but thank you for being you and thank you so much for your friendship! My thoughts and prayers are with you!

We couldn't agree more.

In the end, we are thankful. Thankful that we got to spend our lives with this man, our husband and father. Thankful that he provided us with a home, a safe place where we could grow and flourish and eventually set out to pursue our own dreams. Thankful to have shared moments of joy and laughter, moments of sadness and tears, the experiences that bonded us and made us who we are. Thankful that he lived a good life, filled with friends. Thankful to have had time at the end to prepare for the inevitable, to reflect on our lives together, to say what we wanted to one last time.

And, most of all, we are thankful that we can say of him, this that, no matter who we are, we all hope for:

He loved and he was loved.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held at 11:00 am on Saturday, June 22, 2019, at First Baptist Church, 200 W. Church Circle, Kingsport, Tennessee.

The family will receive friends following the service.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to The American Cancer Society at cancer.org, or to the Music Ministry of First Baptist Church, Kingsport.

Events

JUN **Celebration of Life Service** 11:00AM
22

First Baptist Church
200 W. Church Circle, Kingsport, TN, US, 37660

Comments



“ Mrs Womack... Vicki and Don Jr... Since hearing the news of Don's passing I have been deeply saddened.. Had no idea he was ill...I would have communicated with him..I can say this with all honesty he was one of the finest gentleman I have ever known...He was a wonderful person in many many ways...Jimmy Hudson

Jimmy Hudson - March 02, 2019 at 07:34 AM



“ Our deepest sympathy to the Womack family. Don was a true gentleman. We will always treasure our friendship and business relationship.

Bob & Myrl Quillen

Bob Quillen - February 25, 2019 at 02:38 PM



“ My mother, Louise Camblos, would be sending gratitude for Don's life if she were alive today. I know because she often spoke of him.

John Bradburne

john bradburne - February 24, 2019 at 05:18 PM



“ Prayers for the Womack family. When I worked with him at J.C.Bradford & Co. years ago, he was always kind to me and showed me much respect. He always had a funny story to tell, almost every day ! He sure will be missed by family and friends.

Carolyn Camp Gibbons

Carolyn Gibbons - February 22, 2019 at 09:10 PM



“ My wife and I were saddened by the news of Don's passing. My wife, Sherry Giles, was a neighbor, friend, and baby sitter for the Womack Family. The obituary was so true and honored Don and his wonderful family. I always had a soft spot in my heart for Wendi and am certain she and her Daddy are holding hands in Heaven...

Preston Potter - February 22, 2019 at 01:19 PM



“ I just wanted to say what a beautifully written tribute to Don. What an amazing man, and the life he lived! You guys were all so lucky to have such awesome experiences and memories together, and in that, I'm sure Don will live forever inside you! May God bless you and may He give you strength.

John Alan Smith - February 21, 2019 at 08:38 AM



“ What an insightful family bio. And it would be difficult to improve on Bill's tribute. Don always had a way of making one feel how glad he was to see him....because he really was. His disposition? We once spent eight days in a van, motels and on golf courses, during which he uttered not one cross word....except maybe to golf balls.

Alex Looney - February 20, 2019 at 04:37 PM



“ The obituary was a wonderful tribute to Don's life. Love to you all.

Eric Dawson - February 19, 2019 at 10:48 AM



“ Doug And Rosalie Smith sent a virtual gift in memory of Donald Reid Womack Sr.



Doug and Rosalie Smith - February 19, 2019 at 09:01 AM



“ So thankful to read your loving tribute to Don. You and the children have been in our hearts and prayers EVERY DAY, and will continue to be. Our love to Vicki and young Don, and especially to you Judy. What strength you've had. God bless us all.

Doug and Rosalie Smith - February 19, 2019 at 09:07 AM



“ My husband and I lived beside his mother in Big Stone Gap. She was a fine lady as was the entire family. My dad, Shug Hall, knew the family well. Prayers.

Janet Wilson - February 19, 2019 at 08:06 AM



“ Dear Bud & Linda ... and ALL of Don's family this morning,

Having just "heard" about his passing, I "clicked" online to read his obituary and all I can say is WOW. How blessed you all are, to have had him in your lives. His life seemed to include any & all ... always a "more the merrier" kind of man. Always adding yet another friend to his continuing circle.

All of us in the Bybee area have Linda & Bud in our hearts & prayers ... but now that we feel we know ALL of you ...we've definitely included the "rest of the Womack Clan", too.

An additional note to whomever honored the family by writing Don's incredible obituary ... I need your name & number !!! NEVER have I read anything so perfectly written about anyone I didn't know personally. You have an amazing gift & you gave it to Don's family today. The tears are there, but they're tears with smiles, as they will have you to thank, for bringing forth some of the many wonderful memories of this outstanding man.

We love you Bud & Linda!
Susan & Ronnie Ellison
Bybee, TN

Susan Ashmore - February 19, 2019 at 06:59 AM



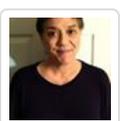
“ Sending our love and heartfelt sympathy. We Love You all!
Matthew 5:4

Love,

Bud & Linda & Family



Bud & Linda Dawson - February 18, 2019 at 11:53 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album





Mandy Pratt - February 18, 2019 at 06:00 PM