



## Donald Andrew Merrill Sr.

March 21, 1928 - September 14, 2020

Family and friends of Donald are invited to share their favorite photos, video memories and heart felt messages on his Tribute page on the Green Hills Mortuary Website.

# Comments

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“ My name is Gavin. My dad's name is Robert. My dad asked me if I could pay tribute to an important guy in his life. I don't know what my dad uncle great Don is to me family wise, but I do know he was the greatest person to my dad. My dad always talks about what a great person uncle Don is and I just want people to know he is important to my dad and my dad says when nobody else cared he did. I didn't know my dad's uncle Don that much but dad says he helped us through hard times. I met hime twice and am happy I did. He is special to dad and he is special to me.

G - October 11, 2020 at 09:37 PM

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“ It has been a struggle for me to share my memory of Uncle Don. The words I write cannot accurately articulate just how special of a man he was. The endless pages I have written and rewritten in attempt to pay him a proper tribute, simply fall short. It is not so much that the words escape me, as it is, he was bigger than words can express. Realizing this, all I can do is speak from the heart.

Growing up, I spent many a summer with the Merrill's. Nothing but fond memories. The train trip to San Francisco, air shows, museums, Disneyland among many other activities and trips. The trips in themselves were fun, but it was more than that. Uncle Don seemed to enjoy taking us, as much as we did to go. He was always a wealth of knowledge wherever we went, I always seemed to learn something. I looked up to my Uncle Don, he was the male role model I desperately needed.

As life goes, we lost touch over the years. As fate would have it, we managed to reconnect again thanks to my mother's reluctancy with technology. My mother was still rocking the flip phone, I could never get her to switch to a smart phone. Who knew that decision would be so rewarding? Uncle Don attempted to send my mother some old pictures of family. I believe she got them, but they were far too small to see on her flip phone and she did not know how to transfer digital data and save them. So, she asked Uncle Don to text me the photos so I could save them. From there our relationship really began to evolve.

He would text me family history items and photos, historical and religious links. First off, I thought it was amazing he was a texter – as most folks beyond a certain age are reluctant, or willing. That gave me a chuckle, but also maybe speaks about his resiliency. I cherished our conversations, he was so insightful, sharp, intelligent, supportive, and full of sound advice. I remember expressing to him what an impact he had on my up bringing and how grateful I was to him, he was genuinely moved, not even realizing what he had done for me was so huge.

That's just the kind of man he was. He just did for people, no expectations. Fast forward to the Pandemic, he was just incredible and beyond supportive for me and my family. He called to check on me repeatedly, he knew the economy was hit hard and asked how I was job wise. I tried to downplay things, but he would see through them and pressed. When he found out I lost my job due to the pandemic he sent a check. It gave me guilt, I tried to refuse. He was very convincing, and in true Uncle Don fashion he gave me a family history lesson in the process (Grandma/Clara in the great depression). He also related a story about when he was raising a young family people had helped him, because that is what family does and implored me to set aside pride for the family who is dependent on me.

It was an exceedingly difficult time for me, what was most invaluable was his emotional support. He related life experience/knowledge and general positivity. He even did job searches for me online and sent me links. Thoughtful, generous, and caring. Helped me through one of the most challenging times in my life. It was so difficult to see his health decline, not being able to go show him the same love and support he gave me (due to the pandemic).

In the end, these writings feel all so selfish. About me, what was done for me, my loss, my sorrow. In the end, I guess that is the way great people make you feel – because their impact is so great, it leaves such a void. No matter how hard you try to emulate them, you pale in comparison.

There is some comfort to be found in the fact that he was a man of faith, has the life resume that backed that faith and is undoubtedly now rewarded.

I love you Uncle Don.

- Rob

**Robert** - October 11, 2020 at 11:18 AM

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“ When you lose someone you love, it leaves a hole in your heart. The more wonderful somebody is, the bigger the hole that’s left behind.

Dad is the most remarkable man I have ever known. The hole he leaves behind in our hearts rivals the Grand Canyon.

Dad was brilliant, kind, openhanded, courageous, tough, humorous, and uncomplaining. This is the shortlist to describe this dear man’s attributes.

He was exceedingly modest; he would never have used the aforementioned superlatives in describing himself. What he would have wanted others to know about him was that he was a disciple of Christ. He strove to live a Christ-like life. He had a loving heart and enthusiasm for the Lord, even at the very end. Only a week before dad passed, the hospital chaplain said he was fascinated by Dad’s conversation which focused on information gleaned from a book Dad had been reading by astrophysicist and pastor, Hugh Ross: “Improbable Planet.” The chaplain was deeply impressed that at a time when dad was so gravely ill and weak, he engaged the pastor in an intelligent, stimulating, and exciting conversation regarding scientific evidence adduced in the book by Dr. Ross which showed the improbability that earth, life, etc. could have arisen in the absence of God.

Dad was always thinking what he could do for others.

If Dad perceived someone had a need, he did not wait to be asked to help—he offered help with a smile and was genuinely glad to give. He never called attention to his generosity. Once, a handyman, having gotten his check from Dad, returned to the house—he thought Dad mistakenly put an extra zero onto the check. Dad thanked the man for his honesty but insisted the man and his son accept what he paid (10 times what they asked for). He said, “The two of you worked most of the day and I figure I would’ve had to pay several other professionals that amount to do all those jobs you did, I am a Christian and I can’t pay you less than what you deserve.”

Dad even demonstrated his kindness, and thoughtfulness of others, in the hospital. Toward the end, he was in the hospital numerous times, and we were told by almost every person we spoke with that he was the kindest, most considerate, nicest man they had ever met. And these staff members made it a point to let us know what a dear man he was, how much they appreciated him. He was solicitous of staff, did not want to complain (though he did always make it known he wanted to get home). He told me he did not want to burden them. “They work so hard, they’re so wonderful (to him),” Dad would say.

Every nurse and almost all the doctors told us how kind he was, and that he was their favorite patient. They wished all their patients were like him. Though he felt very ill, he showed ongoing solicitude of others, and graciousness.

Dad courageously fought and won many medical battles over the years—we happily got used to Dad being a walking miracle. For instance, with God’s oversight and the unsundering care from his wonderful melanoma specialist, dad was the only one

out of 80 people in a clinical trial who survived; dad had had stage four, metastatic melanoma that was inoperable. Eventually, dad was left melanoma-free and went on to live about a decade more of his productive, wonderful life, give or take a year or two.

Though he loved life and wanted to stay here, he always said he was not afraid to die; he said knew where he was going to go, and he knew it was Paradise—so why would he be afraid?

September 14, 2020, Dad did pass, and though we grieve his loss, we have the hope of heaven. In that sense, Dad is not gone. He will never be forgotten. His granddaughters called him their “Pal,” and he adored them. His primary doctor (one of Dad’s heroes) referred to him as a sweet man, a tough man; many relatives and friends have described him as a great man. I vote for all of the above. His universal love and concern for others is what set him apart, and rather than let this compliment attach to him, he’d point out he just wanted to honor Christ with his actions.

Well, he certainly has.

He is now enjoying his reward, so, though I have written some things about him using the past tense, Dad lives now, he is not “past tense,” only his earth time is past tense. Right now he is experiencing joy, love and peace in a way we have never known on earth. And praise God, Dad can walk, he has no pain, he doesn’t need glasses any more, and I believe—just like he always laughingly said he hoped—he got back that full head of gorgeous, curly hair.

We miss him and look forward to when we can see him again. The next time we see him, we know it will be with his wife, our mother.