



Donald R. Winslett

February 11, 1935 - May 2, 2021

WINSLETT, DONALD REUBEN, age 86, of McCalla, Alabama, answered, on the evening of May 2, 2021, God's beckoned call to come and dwell in His house of many mansions.

Donald was preceded in death by:

His parents:

Oscar Eugene Winslett

Mittie Cynthia Butler Winslett

His wife and soulmate:

Shirley Ann Stobert Winslett

Four siblings:

Frances Winslett

Hazel Winslett Gilbert (who was married to Marshall)

Eugene Winslett (who was married to Dot)

Howard Winslett (who was married to Imogene)

Donald is survived in life by:

His daughter and only child:

Donna Denise Winslett Barton (who is married to Keith)

Three siblings:

Charles Winslett (who is married to Aletta)

David Winslett (who is married to Brenda)

Wayne Winslett (who was married to Linda)

Donald is also survived in life by numerous nieces, nephews, and friends.

Donald was born on February 11, 1935. He was a breach baby, so his mother gave birth to him at the hospital.

At a young age, Donald gave his life to the Lord and received the rites of baptism at the local swimming hole. In an effort to avoid muddying the water, the neighborhood children had been instructed to not swim there on the days preceding and day of the baptism service. The children were obedient; and Donald remembered the water as having, on that momentous day, been fresh and clear.

Donald attended McNeil Elementary School in Bessemer, Alabama, and Hueytown High School in Hueytown, Alabama. After graduation, he followed in his father's footsteps and went to work at U. S. Pipe and Foundry in Bessemer, Alabama. A dedicated and trustworthy employee, Donald gradually advanced from the pipe run to machine shop, where he was promoted to and worked as supervisor until his retirement.

Donald was a doting father to Donna. Seeing his daughter for the first time after she was born, Donald exclaimed, "Ain't she pretty! She looks just like me!" As a toddler, Donna's first steps were to walk from her mother to her daddy when Donald, sitting on the floor, said, "Come to Daddy."

Through Donald's patient coaching and encouragement; Donna graduated from tricycle to bicycle, with a rather lengthy training-wheel interim between the former and latter. Donna just was not sure removing those training wheels was a sound idea.

Donald and Donna shared countless hours not only with his tossing and retrieving balls for her to bat, but also playing their own version of badminton in which they would count the number of times they could keep the badminton birdie in motion. Reaching two to three hundred uninterrupted racquet hits was not uncommon.

During the many years in which Donald, Shirley, and Donna were members of Morgan United Methodist Church in Bessemer, Alabama; he not only served as a church usher, but also played left field for the church ball team.

When Donna attended McAdory High School in McCalla, Alabama, and

became active in the band program; Donald and Shirley joined and supported the band boosters. Prior to the football games, Donald would assist in directing traffic and locating parking spaces for game goers.

In order for band members to have something to drink after performing their half-time shows, Donald and Shirley would procure canisters of Coca-Cola from Donald's brother, Howard, who managed the "Burger In A Hurry" fast-food restaurant off of Arkadelphia Road in Birmingham, Alabama. Each band member was treated with a cup of ice-cold Coca-Cola.

After Donna and Keith had been dating several months, Donald overheard a conversation she and Keith were having about the possibility, in their future, of marriage. At that point, Donald cut to the chase. Addressing Keith directly, Donald said, "Boy, don't you think you better ask me for my permission to marry my daughter?" Taken a bit by surprise, Keith answered, "Well, can I?" Donald replied, "How do you plan to support her?" As Donald and Keith, at that time, were both gainfully employed at U. S. Pipe and Foundry, Keith answered, "I plan to support her the same way you have for all these years." Donald responded, "Well, I guess I can't argue that." Needless to say, Keith received Donald's blessing; and the rest is history.

Working together as a family; Donald, Shirley, Donna, and Keith once operated; from Donald's and Shirley's home; a thriving ceramic shop, Dirt Dauber Ceramics. Donald was primarily responsible for pouring slip into the molds to form greenware, which would then be cleaned, painted, and fired in the kiln. He was, however, equally proficient at the artistic side of the business and wielded many a brush to paint ceramic creations, some of which the family showed and sold at craft and trade shows throughout Alabama.

Eventually, Keith's childhood love of magic began to evolve into a burgeoning part-time business for Donna and Keith. When Keith was not working his then full-time job as a letter carrier at the Crestline Post Office in Birmingham, Alabama, Donna and he were performing magic at both private and public events. One of their most-notable gigs was performing at a birthday party for

Donald's brother, Charles, who lives in Arab, Alabama.

Matilda, a bantam hen appearing in Donna's and Keith's shows, achieved worldwide fame when she, at the age of fourteen, became the first chicken to be acknowledged, by Guinness World Records, as World's Oldest Living Chicken. Matilda's accolades caught the attention of Jay Leno; who invited Donna, Keith and Matilda to appear on The Tonight Show—where they were on the set with Terry Bradshaw, Howie Long, and Jim Brown. Extremely proud of Matilda's receiving the title; Donald began carrying a photo of her in his wallet and was ready, at a moment's notice, to share the photo and amazing story of his "grandchicken".

In more recent years, when Keith served as pastor of both West Scottsville United Methodist Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and Woodstock United Methodist Church in Woodstock, Alabama; Donald frequented the latter. He enjoyed not only listening to Keith's sermons, but also Donna's musical renderings as church pianist and programmer of the church bell-tower chimes. Donald was an avid fan of Alabama football and seldom missed watching a televised game. On those rare occasions, however, when Alabama was behind with little hope of making a comeback, he would be aggravated to the point that he would turn off the television and leave the room. The only other time he would miss watching an Alabama football game was when there was something Donna really, really wanted to watch on another channel. When Donna's maternal grandmother, Mirtie, gifted Donna with a television for her room, peace in the family reigned supreme.

One of Donald's favorite hobbies was fishing; and he was equally adept whether employing hook, line, and sinker; rod and reel; or fly and rod. Using cork, feathers, hooks, and paint; he even went so far as to craft his own flies, which big-mouth bass found irresistible. Fish literally trembled when they heard Donald's name.

Donald's favorite song was "Shenandoah". Hearing the song never failed to fill his eyes with tears, which he attributed to fond memories the song evoked of his younger years when he would fish, hunt, and camp in the woodlands

surrounding what is now Lay Lake.

As if Donald did not already have enough on his plate, he invested a great deal of time in an endeavor that many of us might find tedious. He liked nothing better than finding a downed hardwood tree, preferably oak. Armed for business with a chainsaw, axe, sledge hammer, and steel wedge; he would reduce the tree to custom-sized firewood to fit the fireplace inserts of not only him and Shirley, but also Donna and Keith.

In winter months, Donald kept a generous supply of marshmallows; which he would spear, toast over the fireplace embers, and share with anyone present at the time. He even designed his own multiple-marshmallow toasting pitchfork, which he wrought and brought home from U. S. Pipe and Foundry. Accomplished in cooking and baking; Donald never hesitated to lend, in the kitchen, a hand to Shirley. After gathering, shelling, and freezing pecans from Donna's and Keith's prized pecan tree; Donald would add the pecans to the ingredients necessary to concoct decadent homemade fudge and crispy Toll House cookies. Banana pudding and lemon icebox pie were a couple of his other culinary specialties. Shirley's personal favorite was his devil's food cake with white frosting, which he always baked special for her birthday.

Another of Donald's hobbies was gardening. He was noted for being a master grower of tomatoes; which he tirelessly and lovingly nurtured from seed to sprout to mature plant. In the world of tomatoes, he declared "Jetsetter" tomatoes to be the best variety. When it came to Donald's tomatoes, one slice per sandwich was ample.

On those occasions when his fishing and gardening netted an overflow, Donald was quick to share his bounty with family, friends, and acquaintances. He even went so far as to drive a nail, on which he would hang bags of homegrown fruits and veggies, into the mailbox post of one of his closest neighbors.

Donald's memory will be forever etched in the minds of those who found themselves in the direct paths of his kindness and generosity. Those fellow sojourners, however, who stayed closest to him as he navigated the hills and

valleys of his earthly journey will remember him for something more, his extreme bravery and determination in facing the daily uncertainties of dementia.

In 2 Timothy 4:7-8 (KJV), the Apostle Paul wrote:

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

This Scripture passage aligns beautifully with Donald's life, which was and is an inspiring testimony of Christian love and compassion.

A private graveside service for Donald was held at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 6, 2021, at Cedar Hill Cemetery; 650 Circle Heights Circle, Bessemer, Alabama, 35020. Pastor Keith Barton officiated, and McCalla Memorial Funeral Home directed.

Cemetery Details

Cedar Hill Cemetery

650 Circle Heights Circle
Bessemer, AL 35020

Previous Events

Graveside Service

MAY 6 (CT)

Cedar Hill Cemetery
650 Circle Heights Circle
Bessemer, AL 35020

Tribute Wall

MJ

“ *Donald Winslett will always be a shining light in my memory. We were high school sweethearts and he will always remain to be the kindest and gentleness man I ever knew. In my lifetime I will never forget him.* ”

Mamie Justice - May 28, 2021 at 07:53 AM