



M. Donald Wright

June 30, 1935 - March 13, 2023

With great sorrow and bittersweet gratitude, our family announces the passing of our kind, generous, intelligent, and endlessly creative husband, father, grandfather, brother and uncle, M. Donald Wright.

Born in Morgantown, West Virginia in 1935, Don was a leader at Morgantown High School where he met his future wife of 63 years, Jane Clark. After graduation, Don had planned to become an engineer, but, true to his acerbic wit, when the West Virginia School of Engineering burned to the ground, Don declared it was crystal clear that law school was now the best option for him. Don proceeded to graduate from the West Virginia School of Law, and then went on to pass his exams to become a Certified Public Accountant.

Don began his Accountancy career in 1960 at the Pittsburgh office of Arthur Andersen & Company. He became a manager in 1966, transferred to the Philadelphia office in 1969, and was admitted to partnership in 1971. During his time at Arthur, he distinguished himself as an advisor to some of the firm's largest clients and established a wide reputation in its estate and personal financial planning practice. In 1982, Money magazine named him on of the seven best financial planners in the country. Prior to his retirement from Arthur Andersen, he ran its Philadelphia small business practice for five years; served on the Mayor's Small Business Tax Force, and taught courses at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. Throughout his career he was an outstanding mentor to young professionals, often serving as a hiring partner and recruiter of new accountants into the firm.

Don left Arthur Andersen after twenty-seven years to pursue his dream of becoming a sole practitioner, opening Wright Consultants PC in 1985. There he specialized in tax and estate planning for closely held businesses and high net worth individuals. His daughter Beth, now a tax and estate planning attorney in Don's footsteps, joined the practice in 1991, where they worked together for over thirty years. Throughout his career, Don simply loved his job, both the intricacies of the profession, which allowed his keen intellect to roam free; and the personal nature of the work, which fed his abiding desire to help his clients and friends to succeed in their own pursuits and dreams.

During this final phase of his career, Don was also Dean of the Master's Program in Tax at the American College of Life Underwriters in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania (Now American College of Financial Services), recognized for its degrees and designations in the financial planning and life insurance fields. He wrote major coursework and oversaw several academic departments.

Don lived through major changes in the tax law (he kept every version and amendments of the code on his shelf, noting wryly the disturbing increase in their size); technological advances in the field; and the challenging software requirements of a modern tax practice. He was unrelenting in his desire and capacity to understand and use all these tools, emblematic of his passion for learning and commitment to excellence.

Throughout his life Don was an active member of the Presbyterian Church, notably Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church, where he and his wife have been members for almost fifty years; and later the Sarasota Church in Sarasota, Florida. At Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church, he served as head of the Trustees, participated in the Call of Pastors, and became an expert in the tax laws unique to Ministers.

Don loved the beach, spending time in Stone Harbor, New Jersey in his teens, twenties, and thirties, where he lifeguard, and worked at two iconic Stone Harbor institutions: Henny's Café and Springers Ice Cream (Don became a lifelong friend and confidante with the owners of both businesses). Don and his wife also loved the beaches at the Outer Banks of North Carolina, Hilton

Head, South Carolina, and finally Longboat Key, Florida, where every year he waited with eager anticipation for the next stone crab season.

Over the years, Don was known for collecting and sending articles, cartoons, and book recommendations to friends and family members—always keeping those he cared about in mind. He developed close, personal relationships with young practitioners and friends of his daughter Beth, who affectionately referred to him as “Big Don,” because that is exactly who he was. He loved sports cars and races; Scotch Irish ancestry and Scotch whiskey.

Closer to his hometown roots, Don loved folk and country music—especially Johnny Cash and the Kingston Trio—as well as smooth jazz, especially when combined with Vespers at his church. He was a passionate Mountaineer and Philadelphia Flyers and Phillies fan, and had a full-sized picture of the Broad Street Bullies in his office. Finally, it is altogether fitting that another of his musical favorites, John Denver, famously described Don’s beloved West Virginia as “Almost Heaven,” which is where we know Don is headed as we speak.

At bottom, Don was a class-act and consummate gentle-man who loved his wife and his family with an intensity and generosity which knew no bounds. He is survived by his loving wife, Jane Wright (nee Clark); his daughter Beth (Richard) Brake, of Berwyn, PA; grandchildren (who called him Sir G): John and Charles Brake; two sisters: Beth (Russ) Suskind, of Utica OH, Peggy (Gary) Krier, of Lancaster, CA, as well as beloved nieces, nephews, and dear friends.

There will be a private interment.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church or the West Virginia University Foundation.