



Donnie R. Smith

July 19, 1935 - April 5, 2023

Donnie “Don” R. Smith, 87, of Centralia, passed away, Wednesday, April 5, 2023, at Saint Louis University Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri surrounded by family.

He was born July 19, 1935, in Gladewater, Texas, the son of Perry Smith and Marjoria (Maurer) Smith. He married Kathryn “Kathy” Bowen, and she survives in Centralia. Don and Kathy have shared their life together for 67 years.

In addition to his wife, Kathy Smith of Centralia, he is also survived by his son: Mark F. Smith and wife Cindy of Centralia; daughter-in-law: Beth Kenny of Denver, Colorado; five grandchildren: Tyler Smith of Trenton, Jaclyn Smith and Hannah Holt of Springfield, Mandy Albers and Trevor of Centralia, Henry Smith of Denver, Colorado, and Eleanor Smith and Steven Price of Denver, Colorado; a sister: Netje L. Woolbright and husband Charles of Centralia; two brothers: John Spears and wife Barb of Odin and Allen Spears and wife Margaret of Centralia; several nieces and nephews.

Don was preceded in death by his parents, his son: Michael D. Smith, and his sister: Lavenia Chivarrio.

Don was a graduate of Centralia High School Class of 1953; he started 3

years of varsity football for A.L. Trout. During his sophomore year, Coach Trout announced that Don and Jimmie Evers were the two best passers he had coached.

In the summers between his high school years, he played shortstop in the Washington County Baseball League. In 1953-1954, Don was the sixth man on Art Allen's Centralia Junior College basketball team that placed 10th in the nation. He also played on the first CJC baseball team batting over .400, while pitching and playing short stop.

From 1954 through 1956, Don served in the Army (82nd Airborne Div.). During his service he was the leading receiver on the football team. He was the only player on the team not to have played college football. After serving in the Army, he played on the Centralia Merchants fast pitch softball team that placed second in the state tournament in Bloomington.

Don graduated from Eastern Illinois University, and he returned to Centralia High School in 1961. For 33-years, he would coach everything but golf and tennis. In 1967, he became only the 3rd head football coach at CHS following Trout and Evers. Through 1979, he compiled a record of 71-47-4. His 1969 team known as the "Wild Bunch" was undefeated (9-0) and ranked tenth in the nation by one magazine. He returned as head football coach in 1989 and had a record of 10-17 over three seasons.

After retiring from Centralia High School, he coached the women's basketball team at Kaskaskia College from 1995 to 2001.

Don was a member of the Centralia Elks Lodge 493. He was a member of First Baptist Church in Centralia. Don was an avid golfer and enjoyed spending time with his friends and family.

Per Don's wishes, cremation rites will be accorded, and a graveside service will be held Thursday, April 20, 2023, at 2:00 PM at Hillcrest Memorial Park in Centralia with Dr. Clara Voss officiating. Military Honors will be accorded at the gravesite by the Centralia American Legion Post 446 and Centralia V.F.W. Post 2055. A Celebration of Life gathering will be held at 4:00 PM at Fairways at Greenview Golf Course. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Wild Bunch Fund and will be accepted at the Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home at 235 North Sycamore Street Centralia, Illinois 62801, (618)532-3523, who is honored to be of service to Don's Family. Online condolences may be made to the family by visiting www.sutherlandfuneralhome.com and the Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home Facebook Page.

Previous Events

Graveside Service

APR 20. 2:00 PM (CT)

Hillcrest Memorial Park
2500 Old Highway 51 North
Sandoval, IL 62882

Celebration of Life Gathering

APR 20. 4:00 PM.

Fairways

Tribute Wall



“ *Sutherland Funeral Homes, Cemetery and Cremation Services created a Tribute Video in memory of Donnie R. Smith*



Sutherland Funeral Homes, Cemetery and Cremation Services - April 17, 2023 at 10:57 AM

CB

“ *My condolences to all of Dons family , enjoyed having him for football coach my junior and senior year in the seventies. Chris Boles*

Chris Boles - April 29, 2023 at 11:01 AM

GH

“ *To Kathy and the rest of the family, I don't know what I can share that other's haven't already. He coached me and the other Angels in the early 2000's. Then, when I was getting my first coaching/teaching job he was one of my references. He told the A.D. that I would be great at coaching because I practically coached while I was playing at KC. When I got that job, he took me out for dinner and a Bud Light. What a great impression he made in two short years.*

Gina Hacker - April 19, 2023 at 11:20 AM

Jl

“ Kathy, we were so sorry to hear about Don. He holds a special place in Jim's heart and therefore, in mine also. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. He has left a legacy that you can be proud of by impacting many young athletes in this community. He will be missed by all who called him Coach and many others, too.

Barb and Jim Danielwicz

Jim - April 11, 2023 at 03:58 PM

DK

“ Kathy: I just learned of Don's passing. I am indeed sorry for your loss and send condolences to you and your family. Don was well known and liked in this area and will be missed. May God's peace and grace attend you at this time of loss.

D K Klein



D K Klein - April 10, 2023 at 09:40 PM

DT

“ Kathy, I am so sorry to learn about Don. My condolences to you and your family. Don unknowingly endeared himself to me when I was in high school. He was the only coach at the high school who complimented/congratulated me whenever I shot a good round in our Orphan golf matches. As you know, he has been one of my best friends on and off the golf course for many many years. We had great matches, lots of fun, and we made wonderful memories. We played a match in the club championship and I was fortunate to win 2 and 1. He shook my hand, patted me on the back, looked me square in the eye, smiled and said, "Well played Mark". Brought tears to my eyes and memories from my high school days. His little boy grin, smile and laughter will forever be a picture in my mind about my buddy Don! He was respected and loved by many. God bless him. He touched many lives and we are all better for knowing him. We shall miss him.

Sincerely,

Your friend, Mark Terry

Dr. Mark Terry - April 10, 2023 at 12:15 PM

JS

“ Our sincere condolences to Kathy and family. Don was one of the kindest persons I've known. The world needs more great men like Don. May he rest in peace.

Jay and Karen Schmitt - April 09, 2023 at 12:30 AM

TK

“ Kathy , GOD Bless you and your family during this time of sorrow yet it should be a time of celebration, For you and Don both have made your mark as successful people in life here in Centralia IL. As both you and Don have been great corner stones, and public figures, Setting examplae for all to see and try to follow. My mothers house at 1334 S Lincoln was the first house you ever sold. Mildred Keeley, God Bless You Hugs ,, TOM K Keeley

Thomas k keeley - April 08, 2023 at 11:07 PM

SE

“ Kathy,
Please accept my deepest sympathies. Coach Smith is a man in my life who I love and respect. He demanded the best from me and the lessons learned from playing for him have stayed with me to this day. I will always be grateful for Coach Smith's impact on my life and I know my teammates heartily agree.

God Bless You Coach Smith!

*Scott Engel
Class of 1969*

Scott Engel - April 08, 2023 at 10:17 PM

MM

“ To Mark and family; I had Coach Smith as my drivers ed instructor the summer of '72. He was the best one and to the best of my knowledge we listened to Rocket Man on the radio. Thoughts and prayers are with you at this time. Cherish all the memories. Mike Marcum Murfeesboro TN

Michael E Marcum - April 08, 2023 at 12:03 PM

CE

“ It is hard to describe coach Smith and what he meant to everyone whose life t he touched. Like they say, "hope he knew." I do not believe there could be one player who was not influenced by his ability to get something "deeper" out of them, and we all loved and respected him for it. He was teaching us at the time and we didn't know it.

He made us all work hard, drive ourselves and become better to become who we are today. Coaches shape young men and women, he was one of those coaches that had nothing but positives to bring into your life.

Coach Smith touched thousands of lives, as for me, I am better for it.

I celebrate his life and family, your 67 years of marriage and everything he meant to every life he touched.

Thank you Kathy for your sharing such a great man, mentor, coach, and teacher.

Creig Engel

Creighton Engel - April 07, 2023 at 11:29 PM

K(

“ In the Spring of '71 it was warm and sunny and there had been a hard rain over night leaving pot holes in the roads filled with water. By luck of the draw, Coach Smith happened to be my Drivers ED teacher that quarter. It was only the 2nd time I had ever been behind the wheel of a car, so I diligently drove down the center of my lane right through the pothole filled with water. Coach happened to have his window rolled down with his arm resting on the door and subsequently had it drenched with water. I was mortified over what I had done and glancing back in the rearview mirror at my buddies, Tee & Al the sheer shock on their faces magnified my fear as to what was to come next. But quietly & calmly Coach pulled his arm in and rolled up his window. Paused a moment and then remarked, the next pothole I saw, I should choose to drive around it and not through it.

End of story for that moment. But I've never forgotten his restraint in not immediately rolling his eyes, shaking his head then humiliating me by loudly confirming I was a dumb female driver.

Thank you Kathy and Mark, for all the bitter cold nights you sat through football season after football season sharing Coach Smith with so many high school students at CHS. May all, that others share, help ease your sadness hearing how these fond memories of Coach live on.

Karen (Burge) - April 07, 2023 at 03:45 PM

DP

“ Sad to learn of Don's passing. We became friends during his coaching days and that wonderful year of 1969 as Jim Taxman and I broadcast the games on the Centralia radio station. Don and I also broadcast an ISU college football game for a Decatur radio station. I am glad to call Don a friend. I'm sure he had an enormous positive impact on young lives. Thinking of you, Kathy, in your time of grief

Dan Parker - April 07, 2023 at 02:58 PM

GF

“ I learned to drive with Coach Smith. Took Driver's Ed after school since I never took a study hall! He would have all of us drive ourselves home and since we were neighbors, I was last before he went home!! Wonderful man! RIP Coach! 💕🙏 Gina Burge Fischer

GINA FISCHER - April 07, 2023 at 02:42 PM