



Donald West "Don" Edwards, Sr.

May 3, 1943 - September 28, 2021

Don Edwards of Spring Creek/Ann Arbor/Live Oak headed off on his final adventure on September 28, 2021. He's survived by the love of his life, Suzanne Edwards, four sons, West, Cutler, Lyman, and Brooks, their partners, and four grandchildren. We'd like to share some remembrances of him:

Brooks: Thinking of all the things I learned from Dad, I realize how much of it I took for granted until I continuously met people who had NO idea how to do the things that he taught me. Singing Johnny B Goode in an old Ford, throwing saw blades, how to pack and load a truck or do my own car repairs, fishing, TYING KNOTS! I told him multiple times how important it is to me to know how to tie a quick, efficient knot when loading anything in a truck or van, ESPECIALLY when I watch quite capable people tie things down and feel secure only to see their loads fall over on the first turn! Things I use or do every day that reflect his impact on me. Teaching others the things I know, things my Dad taught me, has always been a powerful feeling for me because it HELPS others. And that is something BOTH of our parents instilled in me and all of us. When you TEACH, HELP, and CARE for others everyone benefits.

But that's not it. That is only the tip of the iceberg. It's more than that. It's both more general and more specific than that. It's about acceptance and respect and inclusion. You could see it in his impact in the community, whether

through giving people second chances and trying to get people back on their feet, or his time as county commissioner. I remember the boxes and boxes of shirts he had donated to his campaign; he gave those shirts and football jerseys away and impacted so many people. Yes, it impacted the parents, but this was when I was in elementary school. I still had guys come up to me in HIGH SCHOOL asking about Dad, guys who I barely saw on a weekly basis. "How's your dad, what's he doing?" They remembered his visits, they remembered those shirts. That was powerful for me as I grew into adulthood.

And THAT is what I've been thinking about the most. Our parents both raised us to accept people, to understand people are different, have different lives and values. Dad could and would talk to anyone about anything, because he made them feel important and he really focused on that person. Asking questions, drawing people out. And then he would always have something to add, to discuss with that person. It was incredible! Maybe a little tiresome as a kid who just wants to get on with the day, but as an adult I realized it meant I was more patient with people. Everyone has something to offer, something to give, something you can learn from them. You just have to be willing to talk to them, give them a chance to be themselves. And, for me, Dad epitomized that. That appreciation for others, that sharing of knowledge and experience, because it benefits everyone in ways you can never imagine, sometimes for the rest of their lives.

West: The Dad I knew was a rebel; very independent, and a non-conformist. He was an entrepreneur, as I am now. He loved the outdoors and protecting the environment, as I do now. He taught me to drive a stick shift, ride a dirt-bike, how to properly build a fire and how to find water when you needed it. He taught me to appreciate bluegrass, and he was a very good banjo and mandolin player. He taught me that I can't please everyone with some decisions I make but to stick with it if I follow my gut. The time he shared with me camping and tramping around in the Smokey Mountains is a priceless part

of my life. I am proud to pass on his lessons to my sons. I loved him dearly and he was a big part of who I am as a dad today.

Lyman: Dad was a wealth of practical (and impractical) knowledge. If he didn't know the answer he was always game for prolonged speculation on what the answer might be! By comparison, if he didn't know how to do something, he didn't waste much time talking about it. Instead, he just got started, and endeavored to figure it out as he went. This is one of his most memorable traits: a relentless ability and willingness to try/figure/work it out. Thanks Dad, for sharing that with all of us.

Cutler: My dad was a surprising guy, and complex. Stuffed with wanderlust, he was also a hard-core homebody focused on family, and an independence built on togetherness. Serially self-employed, his talents for craftsmanship and salesmanship took us across a varied landscape of life experiences: custom leathergoods maker, realtor, convenience store owner, luggage and leather retailer, vintage Airstream dealer, and a stint of valuable public service as a Wakulla County Commissioner. A self-taught sociologist, he liked both craft and sales for the opportunities they gave him to study what motivates people. Value, relationships, creativity – he understood those levers of human interaction intuitively, and I think simply observing him conduct himself in social and business settings taught me more about moving through the world than perhaps any of my education. He was irretrievably, ruthlessly committed to the idea that people are good, that relationships are important, and that – given the opportunity – most people will surprise you with what they accomplish. Of course, he got burned a lot trying to help people out, but he was a hopeless romantic who continued to look for the good in people well into his later years.

He also carried a childlike sense of wonder and amazement about the world

around him, which he transferred to us. Music, art, wordplay (he loved a Spoonerism), and the beauty of the natural environments in which we lived and traveled never ceased to generate a comment. I think he found the most joy in life when he was sharing a brief “wow” moment with someone, whether it was the flavor of a perfectly fried piece of mullet, the sublime sounds of a Bill Monroe mandolin break, or the violent pirouettes of vintage Walter Payton. For Don Edwards, life was a thing to be lived, love was what fueled it, and love was, like beauty, found in the details.

I think we would all call him a real character, and though he certainly didn't seek out attention, he couldn't help but cut a swath. I got to spend 45 years with him, listening, learning, dreaming, and wondering. And now he's free to explore the world forever, without waiting on someone to go back and get a boatload of dimes. Bon voyage, Bwana Don!

A memorial service will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to American Red Cross (redcross.org)

David Conn and Kimberly Crum with Bevis Funeral Home of Crawfordville are assisting the family with arrangements. (850-926-3333, www.bevisfh.com)