



Donald W. Barnabo

September 16, 1933 - January 26, 2021

Donald W. Barnabo passed into eternal life on January 26, 2021. Donald, son of Dante and Leocadia (Cybulski) Barnabo, was born on September 16, 1933 in Ironwood, MI. Don graduated from Hurley High School in 1951. He attended Marquette University in 1952, and graduated from UW Superior in 1958. While playing college football, he was captain of his team and received All-American Honors. Don received a Masters degree in Physical Education in 1961, from Colorado State College in Greeley, CO.

Don was united in marriage to the love of his life, Arloa Lillstrom on August 10, 1957 at Saint Mary's Catholic Church in Hurley. The high school sweethearts' love story was one for the ages. Don and Arloa raised four Barnabo children; Dana Lee, Dante James, Thomas Maurice and Lana Jeanne.

Don Barnabo taught and coached for 32 years. He started his career at Oconto Falls High School in 1958. From 1959-1967, he served as teacher, coach and eventually as Athletic Director at Beloit Catholic High School. In 1967, Don Barnabo left Beloit Catholic to become a teacher and coach at the new Janesville Parker High School. Coach Barnabo's infectious smile and uncanny ability to inspire not only athletes, but fellow teachers and staff, paved the way for Janesville's newest high school. Barney was responsible for coining the Parker slogan, "You Gotta Wanna."

In 1967 Coach Barnabo received the Big 8 coach of the year award. He was a member of WEA-NEA and JEA, Wisconsin Retired Education Association, Wisconsin High School Coaches Association and served on the WHSCA clinic staff. He spoke at a number of coaching clinics and had articles published in the Athletic Journal, Scholastic Coach, Coaching Clinic and WIAA publications. He was a member of the WFCA Committee, which was responsible for a supporting role in developing the WIAA playoffs program. Barnabo was inducted into Wisconsin High School Football Coaches Hall of Fame in March of 1987.

Former assistant coach and eventual successor Joe Dye said of Barnabo, "Good people

make you better, and Barney did that to a lot of people.” The football program at Parker, and all the students’ lives he impacted, became his professional legacy

In Coach’s own words, “It has been my feeling that the greatest reward of coaching is seeing the athletes succeed in their various endeavors of life. It is especially gratifying when they find time to come back and say, “Hi.” I thank the Lord for allowing me to be a coach and teacher of young people.”

After retiring from Parker in 1989, Don and Arloa returned to Northern Wisconsin. Don loved the Northwoods and spent the last 32 years enjoying hunting, fishing, taking daily walks, visiting with family and friends, and contributing to the community of Manitowish Waters. He was a longtime member of the Manitowish Waters Lions Club. In 1997 he was named Lion of the year.

Don and Arloa’s combined personal legacy was the family they created together. They loved their family. They were proud of their children and their grandchildren.

The couple’s commitment to the daily loving care of their son Dante James, for his whole lifetime, was remarkable. After Dante’s death in 2000, Don visited his son’s grave every day. After Arloa passed in 2018, he visited both their graves daily. It gives the family great comfort that Don is now with all those loved ones already in heaven.

In eternal life, Don joins parents Dante John & Leocadia, brothers Jack and Bob Barnabo all of Hurley, WI, wife of 61 years Arloa (Lillstrom) Barnabo, children Dana Sweeney of Madison, WI, Tom Barnabo of Des Moines, IA, Dante James Barnabo of Manitowish Waters, WI, and an infant son.

He is survived by youngest daughter Lana Barnabo-Knaack of Madison, WI, son-in-law Daniel Sweeney of Madison, WI, daughter-in-law Susan Barnabo of Des Moines, IA, grandchildren; Willow & Brian Flaherty, Tyler & Melissa Sweeney, Shane & Anna Sweeney, Dalton & Karissa Barnabo, Cole & Linda Barnabo, Sophia Knaack, Madeline Knaack, great grandchildren; Haley, Cooper, Barrett, Dane and Emma Rose, nieces and nephews, and special friends Mike and Pat Hahn.

The family wishes to thank Lana for all she has done to provide the highest level of care for the patriarch of the Barnabo Family.

A celebration of life is planned for a future date when we can all safely gather.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly asks for donations to be made in Coach Barnabo's name to the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association -

WFCA

Attn: Charna Kelsey

PO Box 8

Poynette, WI 53955

Comments



“ I was fortunate to have Coach Barnabo as my football coach at Parker High School from '68-'69'. He was a great coach and his slogan "you gotta wanna" has stayed with me all of my life. It was never more important than this last year when I had major spinal surgery for scoliosis. There were times when I didn't think I would recover and be able to walk again. At times when I was most depressed and wanted to give up I would say to myself "You gotta wanna". That slogan and the love of my family got me through it. I still have a long way to go but I am going to make it. Why? Because "You gotta wanna". I will always remember Coach Barnabo.

Bert Stevens

Bert Stevens - February 09, 2021 at 08:04 PM



“ Don was one of our favorite people at our church OLQP. Since Covid began, we missed his presence at Mass. I remember hearing him sing, especially on his favorite hymns. He always had a friendly hello and smile for us when he walked into church. He and Arloa will always hold a special place in our hearts.

Mary and Jerry Kusiak

Mary Kusiak - February 09, 2021 at 09:56 AM



“ I first knew of Coach Don Barnabo as a teenager growing up in Beloit, Wisconsin. Barney was coaching at Beloit Catholic high school and I was fortunate enough to go and watch his very successful teams play on many Friday nights. As a student at Turner high school I soon became a part of the fierce rivalry between Turner and Beloit Catholic high school. Although, Barney had left my freshman year to take the position as head coach at Janesville Parker high school the Crusaders at Beloit Catholic maintained a strong and successful football program as Barney had taught them well and laid a great foundation.

My first formal introduction to Don was in the spring of 1980 at our Wisconsin state football coaches clinic where Don had posted a position vacancy for an assistant football coaching position at Janesville Parker high school. Little did I know that meeting Don Barnabo would literally take my career path to a very special destination. I was impressed instantly with the warm, gregarious and welcoming personality and mannerisms that Don displayed in our very first meeting. My wife Janis and I moved to Janesville that summer and were immediately welcomed to the community by Don and his dear wife Arloa. Don and his wife welcomed us to cookouts and family dinners featuring wonderful Italian cuisine. Sunday mornings during the football season were spent at the Barnabo house where Barney and I would retreat to their bedroom to shoot 16 mm film off of their bedroom wall. Arloa would prepare and serve hot breakfast and coffee to us while Barney would serve nuggets of football information to me. I found it ironic that my teenage years were spent despising the green and gold of Beloit Catholic high school and here I was working in tandem at Parker High school wearing the same colors with the man who literally put Beloit Catholic football on the map.

As our family grew and years went by we would spend many summers visiting Don and Arloa at Manitowish Waters. Whether it be Don helping my son Jeff and I to boat our first Musky or Arloa sharing the magic of “Loon Days” with Janis and our daughter Jenni the welcoming and compassionate ways of the “Baranabos” persevered through the years and across the miles. We were truly blessed! “You Gotta Wanna”, was Barney’s mantra in football at Parker, but it was literally the way he lived his life. You see Don “wannad” and worked to be the best husband, father, teacher, friend, fishing guide, parishioner, deer camp host and person that he could be every day of his life.

Thank you, Don Barnabo. Rest in peace my friend and me you and yours all be eternally blessed!

Joe and Janis Dy - February 07, 2021 at 08:57 AM



“ Don was truly one of the “good guys”: a good person, a good coach and a good friend. He will be missed.

I loved swapping coaching stories and memories with Don.

Pete and Nancy Guzzetta - February 06, 2021 at 05:31 PM



“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Pat Hahn - February 05, 2021 at 01:18 PM



“ Memories of Don Barnabo (1933-2001) – by Mike and Pat Hahn

Coach was a mentor, best friend and father figure to me for 61 years. Pat and I loved him, as do many of you. Rather than talk about his many good deeds and qualities, this is how I wish to remember him.

When we moved to Manitowish Waters for the summers in 1988-89, Coach decided he would teach me to musky fish and deer hunt! My story is about musky fishing. We would go a lot, mostly in my boat. He worked on me and I became pretty good at it. One morning we went to a small lake on our chain. I was in front fishing and running the trolling motor and Coach was in back. (With musky fishing, the person in back watches the front man and does not throw his lure where the front man has thrown and also uses a different bait.) On this morning I threw a yellow and black top water bait to the edge of a deep hole with no success. As I was about to cast again, I heard a splash and it was Coach's bait. It was the same lure, same color and in the same exact spot as my last cast.

I turned to him and said, "Coach, aren't you watching? I just threw there and with the same bait."

Before I could finish, he yelled, "Get the net! Get the net!"

I netted a 52 1/2" musky! It weighed 38 pounds.

After we revived the fish and put him back, I asked Coach why he did what he did.

His answer was, "Mike Hahn, you fish your end of the boat and I'll fish mine." He said this with a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eyes!

May God bless and keep this fine man.

Patricia Hahn - February 04, 2021 at 11:50 AM



“ Today I am appreciating my good fortune in having worked with Don Barnabo during my years at Parker High School as a teacher and as the principal. I especially remember how Don reached out to students who were not always interested in football, but as the head football coach he reached out to young men at Parker and they became part of the football team and also moved forward as good students. Don worked hard at coaching, teaching and serving as the instructional leader for Parker's physical education department. He was a very positive, kind, generous and fun-loving man that made all who knew him better.

Bill Reis

Bill Reis - January 31, 2021 at 02:26 PM



“ Thanks for the kind words Mr. Reis. He was amazing

Lana Barnabo-Knaack - February 04, 2021 at 05:03 PM



“ You were the best Coach Barnabo. May you rest in peace. John Borley, BCH '69.

JOHN E BORLEY - January 30, 2021 at 09:49 AM



“ In memory of a great man and great coach. May Coach Barnabo Rest In Peace in the hands of the Lord.....(BCH Class of '61) Jim Sarver

Jim Sarver - January 27, 2021 at 08:32 PM



“ As Parker High School's first football coach, Don Barnabo holds a special place in the hearts of many Janesville people, including past and present Gazette sports staff members. He was admired from the start, when the school opened in 1967, and that has never changed.

----Dave Wedeward. retired Gazette sports editor

David Wedeward - January 27, 2021 at 06:22 PM