

Ronald Wesley Maly

WEST DES MOINES – Ron wrote a great obituary for his wife Maxine in May of this year. Here is an effort to honor his life and legacy. Ron was a wonderful son, brother, husband, father, grandfather, and person. He dearly loved his family and friends. Ron was 85 years of age when he joined his Lord Jesus in heaven on Saturday, December 5, 2020.

Ron was born to Alice Margaret and Julius William Maly in Cedar Rapids, IA on September 16, 1935 at 7:55 pm at Mercy Hospital. He was baptized at the age of 12 at Sharon Evangelical United Brethren Church in Cedar Rapids.

When Ron was a kid, he entered a writing contest and wrote about Joe DiMaggio being his favorite baseball player. For finishing second, he won a Louisville Slugger bat autographed by “The Yankee Clipper”. That experience provided a glimpse of the future. Ron’s was always interested in college athletics and that admiration was kindled with his first Hawkeye basketball game in Iowa City in 1946. He and a friend rode the CRandIC train that day to see Iowa beat Purdue. Ron’s first college football game came in 1948 during a stay at University Hospitals in Iowa City. The nurse asked, “the Hawkeyes are hosting Wisconsin today in a football game. Would you like to go?” YES!

Ron loved athletics and daily exercise was important in his long battle with diabetes. He excelled in tennis, baseball, and basketball – he had a great backhand, a decent curveball, and an accurate “set shot” and practiced them all on the courts, driveways, and fields of Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, and West Des Moines. Ron perfected his skills in church gymnasiums and at Hayes Park in Cedar Rapids. He was a proud member of the 1950 Wilson High School Ramblers (Cedar Rapids) baseball team that won the Iowa state championship. Ron taught his children the art of croquet and badminton in the backyard and also ping pong, tennis, baseball, football, and others. He taught his wife and children to enjoy golf but realized that was a game never to take seriously. He was an avid walker logging miles and miles most every day.

Ron wanted to be the first in his family to graduate from college and earned a Bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Iowa and did what many political science majors do – he became a sportswriter. Ron was married to his beautiful wife Maxine Elner Koehn on May 4, 1958 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids. He and Maxine spent a wonderful year and a half in Albert Lea, MN and then moved to Des Moines in 1959. Maxine was truly God’s special gift to Ron. Ron was never happier and more proud than on the days when Maxine gave birth to their sons – Lonn David Maly, Mark Christopher Maly, and Kevin Patrick Maly.

Ron and Maxine began their love of traveling the world when they flew to Europe in 1976. They wanted to get to know people from other parts of the world, see places such as Rome, Prague, and Paris, and ride trains. They liked the trip so much they took their sons to Europe on a similar journey the following summer. Their journeys later included Russia, Italy, the Czech Republic, Austria, Poland, Switzerland, France, The Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Morocco, England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, Denmark, Athens, the Greek Islands, Japan, China and Singapore. They took cruises in recent years to Europe, Alaska, and Hawaii.

Ron's job took him to many bigtime sporting events, including football bowl games, the World Series, NFL Playoff games, and NCAA Final Four basketball tournaments. The bowl games included a number of Rose Bowls, Sugar Bowls, Cotton Bowls, Orange Bowls, Alamo Bowls, Sun Bowls, and a Freedom Bowl. He was along for the ride when Maury John took the Drake Bulldogs basketball team to the Final Four in 1969. Ron and Maury were great friends.

Four times Ron was named by his peers as the Sportswriter of the Year in Iowa and in 2006 he was honored as a charter member of the University of Iowa's media Wall of Fame in the Kinnick Stadium press box. After he retired from over 40 years in the newspaper business, Ron wrote the best-selling book "Tales from the Iowa Sidelines: A Collection of the Greatest Hawkeye Stories Ever Told". 2016 was a special year for Ron and other lifelong fans of the Chicago Cubs.

Truth be told, Ron was a "medical miracle". He realized those two words did not reflect any special capabilities he possessed; rather the miracles that he experienced. He battled diabetes for over 72 years. After being diagnosed with diabetes at 13 years of age, he was told he would not live past 40. He did. Ron attributed the medical portion of "medical miracle" to outstanding caregivers throughout his life – especially his wife Maxine, the University of Iowa Hospitals, the Iowa Diabetes and Endocrinology Center, and the Iowa Heart Center. A heart procedure in 1986 went poorly and Ron was, in his words, "carried by angels" to the operating room for open-heart surgery. Later, he was diagnosed with lung cancer. Fortunately, a delay in the surgery date allowed the cancer to "disappear". Ah, the miracle and the gift of faith. When it came to his health, Ron was always a positive thinker and a fighter and passionately researched every possible medical innovation.

Ron and Maxine always had a special relationship with Mount Olive Lutheran Church and School in Des Moines where Ron was confirmed by the Rev. Reinhold Dohrmann. Ron and Maxine were active members at Mount Olive for over 60 years. There have always been special people at Mt. Olive.

Ron loved to travel with his family and attend the athletic, theatrical, and musical events of his three sons and six grandchildren. He so enjoyed trips to visit family in Arizona, bicycle rides, family reunions at Lake Iowa, picnics at The Ledges and Walnut Woods Parks – all with family. He enjoyed walking the streets of Cedar Rapids including 16th Avenue. Ron's survivors include sons and daughters-in-law Lonn (Julie) Maly, Mark (Pollyanna) Maly, and Kevin (Donna) Maly, and grandchildren Cole (Danielle) Maly, Jerika (Dylan) Bright, Shelby Maly, Claire Maly, Nathan Maly, and Megan Maly, plus many nieces and nephews.

Preceding Ron in death were his wife Maxine, his parents Alice and Julius Maly, his brother Phil Maly, and Maxine's parents Catherine and Henry Koehn.

Family private service: Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Des Moines on Friday, December 11, 2020 (streaming available). A joint committal service will be held on a later date.

Memorial gifts may be addressed to Mount Olive Lutheran Church, 5625 Franklin Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50310. Correspondence contact information: ronaldmaly@gmail.com or in care of Mark Maly 270 23rd Street West Des Moines, IA 50265.

