



Donald C. Samardich

November 9, 1939 - January 25, 2019

Donald Charles Samardich of Cadillac passed away on January 25, 2019 at Munson Medical Center in Traverse City. He was 79.

Born on November 9, 1939 in Detroit to Marko and Suzanne (Aucouturier) Samardjich, his parents preceded him in passing.

Don graduated from St. Martin High School in Detroit in 1957. He served honorably in the United States Navy from 1957 to 1960. Following his military service, he attended Wayne State University, where he played football and completed his undergraduate degree in 1964. He earned his Doctorate of Law Degree in 1970 from Detroit College of Law. While in Law School, he taught at St.

Martin High School and coached football.

In 1971, Jack Meyer, a fellow football coach and a Cadillac native, suggested that

Don apply for a position at the law firm of Korn and Burns in Cadillac. He was offered a position at the firm, and he and his family moved from Royal Oak.

After

a year with that firm, Don started his own law practice. In 1974, David McCurdy

joined Don to form Samardich and McCurdy, P.C. That firm then merged in

1978

with Benson and Wotila to form the Law Firm of Samardich, Benson, McCurdy and Wotila.

Don retired from the law practice in 1990 and took a position with Cadillac Rubber and Plastics, which eventually became Avon Rubber and Plastics, with headquarters in England. He retired as President and CEO of Avon Rubber and Plastics North American Operations in 1998.

Extremely athletic, Don excelled in football, baseball and basketball while in high school and was honored to be selected captain of the high school teams. As an adult in Cadillac, he enjoyed mountain biking, hiking, fly fishing, camping, backpacking, wilderness canoeing, playing tennis, and alpine and Nordic skiing.

He traveled frequently to Big Sky, Montana to spend time with his three children and grandchildren, who live there. With family or friends, he often took trips into the Boundary Waters Wilderness and the Wind River Range in Wyoming, as well as downhill ski trips out East, West and to Canada. An avid tennis player, he also volunteered as a tennis coach for the Cadillac High School girls and boys teams.

He was a voracious reader and often shared books with family members and friends.

A mentor to countless people of all ages, Don had a special gift of making

people

feel that they mattered. He listened empathically and conveyed a genuine sense

that he cared about them. He was exceedingly kind. He loved life, nature, and people. A practical jokester, he had a great sense of humor. He loved to laugh and make others laugh with him.

Don served on many boards in the Cadillac area, including the Cadillac Area Community Foundation, Cadillac School Board, Mercy and Munson Hospital Boards, Northern Precision Products of Leroy, as well as others.

In 1963, Don married Anita Louise Thibert in Royal Oak, Michigan. She and their

four children were the center of his life. A loving husband, father, and grandfather, he is survived by his wife Anita, their four children: Christine (Jason

Raffaele) Samardich of Cadillac, Michael (Robbeye) Samardich, Suzanne (Alex

Hassman) Samardich, Timothy (Lisa) Samardich, all of Big Sky, Montana, along with their grandchildren: Aidan Raffaele of Cadillac, Kjetil and Wren Hassman, Parker and Mateo Samardich of Big Sky.

He is also survived by his sister, Nancy Willetts of Commerce Township, Michigan;

sister-in-law, Jane (Rick) Fulmer of Traverse City; brother-in-law, Carl (Terry) Thibert of Sterling Heights; and Susan, Larry, Linda, Dawn, Peter, Marianne, Donna, Janet, Frank, Andrew, Nancy, Karen, Joey, Brian, Beth, Shawn, Anne, and

Ty, all of whom are beloved nieces and nephews.

In addition to his parents, Don was preceded in death by his siblings: John, Marie, Dolores, Mark, Alexander, Tony; and numerous in-laws.

The memorial mass will be held 10:00 AM, Saturday, May 11, 2019 at Saint Ann Catholic Church in Cadillac with Rev. Fr. Michael Janowski as celebrant.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Cadillac High School Tennis Team, the Salvation Army of Cadillac, or the Cadillac Wexford Public Library. An online guestbook is available at www.petersonfh.com.

Tribute Wall

BV

“ I just saw that Don has passed. I always really enjoyed talking with Don back in Cadillac about sports, business etc. He was the attorney that gave me advice when I started my Gym in Cadillac. I had a great amount of respect for him. Sorry for your loss.

Brad VanNatter - February 06, 2019 at 08:58 AM

JM

“ I am hearing so many wonderful memories from people in Don's life. My memories go way back from the time Don began his law practice in Cadillac in his humble little office at 117 West Cass Street. Working for Don was an experience I will never forget. I learned so much from Don; he had superior intelligence, was witty, kind and generous. I felt very honored that he trusted me when he and Anita left town and I stayed with Chris, Michael, Suzy and Timmy. He even let me make the decision on whether to hire Dave McCurdy! Don never made anyone feel that he was better. Anita and (grown) kids, I know that it must bring you some comfort knowing that Don left such a legacy and that some many loved that man. In sadness, you are in my thoughts and prayers. jan

Jan Belter Masten - February 04, 2019 at 11:50 AM

RE

“ We were so sorry to hear of Mr. Samardich's passing. Our sincerest condolences to Anita, Chris, Mike, Suzy and Tim and all of the family. Don was always so kind and had a smile to share when we would see him around town. This is such a great loss for his family and the Cadillac community. We hope that along with Jesus, Don was greeted in heaven by Tom Petty singing some great Bob Dylan tunes! We are thinking of you all with our love and prayers.

Rich & Liz Eastway - February 02, 2019 at 10:48 PM

JK

“ Don had a far reaching positive influence in this world. The world is a better place because of the life he lived and the legacy that he leaves with his family. We are thankful to have been blessed with your friendship and goodness. We pray that your family finds the strength of Christ in this difficult time.

Jeff & Kerry Krusniak - February 01, 2019 at 08:57 PM

DM

“ This note is with deepest sympathies for your loss. I never had the privilege of meeting Don Smardich, but have heard nothing but endearing tales from his neice, Janet. I also have the utmost respect for Janet's mother and Don's sister, Nancy. I believe he was a very caring and giving person, because I know they are. I pray you have a beautiful and comforting Mass in May. May you feel comfort in God's love and his promise of life after death.

Denise Morris - February 01, 2019 at 06:37 PM

BL

“ What a gentle soul. I am touched to have known him.

Betsy Leavell - February 01, 2019 at 05:56 PM

P(

“ I am truly sorry for your loss! Don had such a great sense of humor-the world will be a little more somber without him in it. My thoughts are with you all.

Penny McMahon (Kitcho) - February 01, 2019 at 10:56 AM

KK

“ Don was a man of many talents. He has touched more lives than any person I have ever known and if you were one of those who was lucky enough to be touched by him; you are a better person because of it. Rest in peace Don. I am proud to call you friend.

Kenneth Kleyn - January 31, 2019 at 06:59 PM

JP

“ Don would hug goodbye and never allow himself to be the first to let go. He lingered and made you realize he really cares and the hug mattered. I do this with my own children and they know it comes from Suzy's Dad. Don and Anita both such great example of a loving couple and family. I knew Samardich's for only a few years and it's been so long since we have been in touch but Don's impact is lasting. You are all in my thoughts.
With lots of love,
Joni

Joni Phillips-Mendyk - January 30, 2019 at 09:58 PM

BC

“ I met Don in 1991 when Horizon Books first opened. He was one of our best customers, but as with the best ones, he was never 'just' a customer. I don't think I ever enjoyed discussing books more than I did with Don. I will always remember when the Taster's Choice couple commercials were on the air, and Don learned that a novel based on them was available in London; the next time he went to London he came home with a copy just for me. I have always treasured it purely for that reason. What a wonderful man he was and how blessed Cadillac was to have a man with such gifts and talents, warmth and humor, and the best heart imaginable.

Beth Anne and Gerald Cox

Beth Anne Cox - January 30, 2019 at 02:24 PM

SN

“ Don was a "giver" in life...and not a "taker". I always admired his integrity and the way he treated people. He was a very special person. I will never forget him.

Steve Nagengast - January 30, 2019 at 12:16 PM

TO

“ Thinking of you and your loved ones, Anita. Don was a wonderful man with a very special woman at his side. You both have been admired by our family. Don will be remembered with great fondness and admiration. His kind nature and generosity should inspire us all to do more of the same in our lives. Thank you, Don. In his memory, let us Live and let live..Be thankful for all we have..Be mindful of those who have less..Be kind to all..And forgive everything.

Tim & Mary O'Neill - January 30, 2019 at 07:24 AM

MP

“ Don was a wonderful man and a joy to work with. He was always willing to take the time to listen and chat with you. We especially remember a UK dinner with him that had us questioning our dinner.. it was a pork chop with an uncooked egg on top.. his erpression was priceless! He will be missed by many. RIP Don

Mike and Sue Peterson - January 29, 2019 at 07:44 PM

DM

“ Don was more of a friend than a patient to me. Every time he came to my office for a check up, we talked more about non medical issues than his medical problems. He always had some new recommendations for books to read. He was one of the best human beings we knew. Always kind and friendly. It was a shock to me when I read about his untimely death. God took him away too soon. We both shall miss him tremendously. I am sure he is coaching tennis in heaven.

Dr and Mrs M.R.S.Nair - January 29, 2019 at 04:41 PM

CS

“ I first met Don in the early '80'

s when I retained him to be my attorney. Over the years, as I would see him about town, he always had a cheerful greeting and a kind word. Someone once wrote that you may forget a name, but you will never forget a kindness paid to you. I will never forget his kindness to me. May God comfort you in your great loss and give you peace.

Cynthia (Eastman) Stambaugh - January 29, 2019 at 02:49 PM

JC

“ Extending our deepest sympathy to you and your family. We first met Don when our youngest daughter starting playing on the tennis team as a senior. Our daughter, who is now 29 years old, shared with us after learning of Coach Samardich's passing that she still had the tennis notes he had given her. Coach had many enduring qualities and touched many lives. Our thoughts and prayers are with your family.

John & Linda Coffell - January 29, 2019 at 12:52 PM

JT

“ Our sincere sympathy to your family. We have so many great memories of Don and your family during the years that our children were growing up. Our prayers are with you all.

Janet & Walt Treadwell - January 29, 2019 at 09:54 AM

EH

“ He will be missed so very much and from thousands of miles away in Australia we both have such sweet memories of Don and Anita . The warmth and genuine care they showed us when we came to live in Cadillac to follow in his corporate footsteps will never be forgotten. Those nights on the road with Don holding sway with his (some times exaggerated) stories, cigar and red wine in hand are embellished in the memory. He and Anita personified the warmth and friendliness of Cadillac and we shall never forget his impact on our lives or our wonderful time in Cadillac. Good on ya Don.

Evelyn & Roger Hunt - January 29, 2019 at 03:22 AM

BE

“ The city of Cadillac is a lesser place without Don. He will be missed. I think I will put on some Bob Dylan in his honor.

Bryan Elenbaas - January 28, 2019 at 10:25 PM

JL

“ I have read obituaries before which have overstated the qualities of the individual but, until now, never one which understated them. Don's obituary definitely understates his qualities. I'm not sure they could be properly expressed with words alone. I worked for Don at Avon Automotive when he joined them in 1990 until I left in 1996. Over those few years Don helped me tremendously with a few personal problems I had. I truly regret not having met him 30 years earlier. My life would have turned out drastically different if I had. Don was the most interesting & unique individual I have ever known in my life. The world will be a much lesser place without him. Prayers to the family and RIP, Don. I hope I have the privilege of seeing you again someday in a higher place.

Jeff Larson - January 28, 2019 at 09:07 PM

CL

“ Smaryd was my monk on top of the mountain only instead of just having one, life changing conversation with him, I was fortunate enough to have him as my tennis coach for four years and then have him only a phone call or a letter away after high school. As a tennis coach he was always so much more interested in teaching us all life lessons than how to play tennis. Sure being tougher than your opponent helped during the match, but it really helped so much more in the real world. I remember one tennis match I was in none of the other coaches or teammates would tell me that if I won we were going to states and if I didn't win we weren't, but Smaryd recognized the importance of knowing the pressure and overcoming it. So he told me. And then he told me to go kick some ass.- My partner and I did. Now, whenever I'm facing an important meeting or tough conversation I always hear Smaryd's voice telling me to Go kick some ass.-

Even when I left high school, Smaryd was always there for me. Whenever I had a career crisis (often) I knew I could call him for advice. I still haven't become the attorney he hoped I would be, but I know the toughness he instilled in me has helped me flourish in my career. I am so incredibly fortunate to have had him in my life and to still hear his advice in my head. I am a girl from blue-collar Cadillac and I am tougher than whoever I face thanks to Smaryd.

Charly Loper - January 28, 2019 at 08:26 PM

GD

“ Don was such a wonderful guy. Always said hello and came over to talk when we would see him. A kind person who we all should aspire to be like. He will be greatly missed in the community. Sending prayers for the family

Gary and Jan Dahlquist - January 28, 2019 at 03:02 PM