

Tribute by Colette Winston

July 23, 2017

In Memory of Henry Mills Winston

My father would have said – howdy - thank y'all for coming. This is a very special day for our family and we thank you for sharing it with us and for your love and support. We thank Watergate South for allowing us to plant a tree in this beautiful garden in my father's memory. We thank the Board for honoring my father and Bill Caldwell, Emily, and Crystal for their invaluable help in having the tree planted and the plaque and flyer created. Thank you to my mother, Tina Winston, and my sister, Gigi Winston, for helping to choose the most appropriate tree to honor my father and for helping with the wording on the plaque. Thank you to Danielle, my daughter, for creating a beautiful flyer and to Howard, who drove to Waldorf, Maryland to get Hank's Cream soda for us. It is ironic that the cream soda is named "Hank" because that was my father's nickname and he loved cream soda! We thank "Tres Creole" for preparing my father's favorite southern foods which we hope you enjoy as he would have!

Shortly after my father passed away last year, a friend of mine from South Africa told me that when a person of great character dies, they say "A giant tree has fallen in the forest of humanity." It is especially fitting that a tree has been planted in my father's memory. He has left a great legacy and, like a giant tree, provided stability, shade, dependability, and wisdom to all who crossed his path. It takes a long time to "grow" trees up to a certain age - they are hard to replace. All these qualities are synonymous with my father.

My father would have been especially proud and honored to have a tree planted in his memory. Most of you don't know this, but he would go around the grounds of the Watergate just outside of the wall beyond our pool and when he saw an empty and good spot, he would buy a tree and plant it. In fact, when Gigi was born, he planted a dogwood in our backyard in her honor. When Danielle was born, he planted a red maple in our front yard on the day of her birth. When his colleague whom he mentored, Maude Thorpe, passed away unexpectedly at a young age, he bought a park bench and placed it in her favorite spot by the Potomac River with a plaque honoring her memory. He did so much for everyone he knew and he loved everyone he knew and this is a very well-deserved and especially touching honor to bestow on him.

I can tell you about his life – how he grew up in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, played basketball in high school, was an Eagle Scout, fought in WWII in the Pacific where he narrowly escaped a kamikaze pilot attack in the radio room where he had been minutes before and was thrown into the Pacific from the impact, how he graduated from the University of Alabama in chemistry, how he got a business degree from NYU, and was a buyer at Brooks Brothers, Lansburgh's Department store, Hecht Company, and the General Manager at Watergate, Washington Harbour, Techworld, and, of course, founded Winston Real Estate with Gigi. It is a little known secret that his high school girlfriend whom he took to the prom was Lurleen Wallace, later to be the wife of Governor George Wallace. It is also a little known secret that University of Alabama coach, Bear Bryant, used to stop by on Sundays for dinner at their Tuscaloosa home.

But more important than any of his many accomplishments and successes was the strength of his character and his unwavering devotion and love for his family and close friends. He loved his wife Tina most of all “all ways and always” as he would write on every birthday and anniversary card. And even on days where he could hardly speak, his eyes would light up when Tina would enter the room. And I could not have imagined or wished for a better father. He gave me wise advice and was always there for me, through good times and bad, without a thought of himself. From analyzing star patterns to science projects to homework to setting off fireworks on the Fourth of July and pulling our sleds down our street, donning a Santa Claus costume on Christmas Day which he got from Lansburgh's Dept. store and going from house to house in our primarily Jewish neighborhood, to making famous Sunday Winston breakfasts, he was always there for us. And when Danielle was born, he was the happiest grandfather ever and loved her unconditionally, delighting in picking her up from school every day and being the first car in line and playing on the floor with her, having tea parties and putting little toy children in her school bus, building a log cabin, and making biscuits with her, letting her make a dimple in each biscuit with her finger – hence, her nickname, Biscuit. He filmed Danielle monthly on her “little birthday on the 26th, which he never forgot and, in the hospital, he told us: “I did it for you.” My father taught us all by shining example and, even up to the end of his life of 90 years, he showed courage and determination as he struggled to be with his “little family” just one more day. He was a gentleman and a gentle man. Thank you for coming.