



Donald "Don" Laird Jr.

June 14, 1940 - October 14, 2014

Donald Leroy Laird, Jr., 74, of Topeka passed away unexpectedly Tuesday October 14, 2014, at Saint Francis Health Center. Don was born at Saint Francis Hospital in Topeka KS on June 14, 1940, the son of Donald Leroy Laird, Sr. and Isabel (Hoffman) Laird. Don graduated from Hayden High School in 1958 and taught at Hayden High School for 35 years, from 1970 to 2005. Don estimated that he taught almost 9,000 students during his career. In addition to teaching, he coached volleyball, girls & boys swimming and faithfully videotaped athletic events for Hayden. He and his wife Kay chaperoned students on eight trips to France. Don was affectionately known by students as Mr. Laird, and many have expressed he was their favorite teacher. Don had a lifelong appreciation for education. Immediately after high school, he attended St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary for seven years earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy. He then attended Washburn University, Kansas University and Emporia State University, receiving his teaching certificate and a Master's Degree. Don volunteered at the Cat Association of Topeka, the Sandwich Ministry, Let's Help and Doorstep. Don was a railroad enthusiast and traveled on trains frequently, here and in Europe. Don was a loving husband to his wife Kay, the most exceptional brother, devoted uncle to his nieces and nephews, and a caring soul to every living thing. Don is survived by his devoted wife, Kathryn Laird of the home; three brothers, Charles Laird (Sue), Greg Laird (Linda) and Mark Laird (Ellen) all of Topeka; brother-in-law John McBurney (Judy), Liberty MO; sister-in-law Diana

VanWinkle (Les), Coffeyville KS; 12 nephews, 7 nieces, several great-nephews and great-nieces, and many cats that he cared for. Don was preceded in death by his parents, his first wife, Barbara Burghart Laird, and his brother, David Paul Laird. Family will greet friends from 4-6 p.m. Friday at St. Joseph Catholic Church, 227 SW Van Buren, Topeka KS 66603, with a parish rosary prayed at 5:30 p.m. Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10 a.m. Saturday at the church. Burial will follow at Mount Calvary Cemetery. Memorial contributions may be made in Don's name to the Cat Association of Topeka, 1719 SW Gage Blvd Topeka KS 66604, Hayden Catholic High School, 401 SW Gage Blvd, Topeka KS 66606, St. Joseph Catholic Church, 227 SW Van Buren, Topeka KS 66603, or to a charity of the donor's choice.

Tribute Wall



“ Donald "Don" Laird Jr.

January 28, 2023 at 12:08 PM



“ Laird Family. Our condolences to your family for the passing of Don. We became acquainted with him thru our Pharmacy while taking care of his pets. He was one of the kindest and most gentle person's that we have ever been associated with. We will miss our conversations with him. Jim Schwartz and Staff at King Pharmacy

King Pharmacy Staff - October 23, 2014 at 12:59 PM



“ When my fellow classmate John Walsh 88', a talented swimmer at the time, myself and others asked to start a swim team at Hayden, we were told we needed a teacher to sponsor us. Mr. Laird gladly stepped forward to help us form the first Hayden swim team. God Bless Mr Laird.

Mark Parker - October 20, 2014 at 08:15 PM

BA

“ Dear Kay,

I'm saddened by your loss of Don. I was only in his presence four or five times in my life, but I always found him to be an amiable, kind gentleman. I'm thinking of you not only now, but in the coming days and weeks.

Sincerely,

Bob Adamson

Bob Adamson - October 19, 2014 at 07:39 PM

SL

“ Mrs. Laird,

I remember your husband being very kind when you had us to your home. I am sorry for your loss.

Shelli Ledford - October 19, 2014 at 05:29 PM

DO

“ To the Laird Family,

I would like to send my condolences and blessings to you and your family in this time of need.

Mr Laird was one of my favorite teachers at Hayden High school. He was a great teacher and even better person. May God Bless and comfort you during this time of need.

Dan O'Mara - October 18, 2014 at 06:26 PM

MG

“ Dear Laird Family. My sincere condolences on the loss of your beloved spouse, uncle, friend, mentor and brother. Mr. Laird was a truly compassionate human being, and a very kind soul. His words and personal life stories have resonated with me for a long time past high school. I have never met a more humble, and genuine person, than Mr. Laird. He embraced everyone and made them feel special. I know he was welcomed with love in Heaven. He was truly a man of his word, a man of principle, and a man who wanted the best of everyone he met. I dreamt of Paris through his stories, and when I first went to Paris, he was the person I thought of as I stepped off the plane ready to see the sites he told me about so many years before. Peace, love and light to all of you during this difficult time. He was an angel amongst us all.
Margaret Galvez (Schroll) HHS'86

Margaret Galvez - October 18, 2014 at 04:23 PM

MH

“ Mr. Laird was one of my favorite teachers at Hayden. As I was trying to recall details of 26 years ago and having a hard time, that well known quote came to mind---" you may forget what someone said, you may forget what someone did --but you'll never forget how they made you feel ". Mr. Laird was a kind, fair man who was accepting of all of his students. May he rest in peace.
Mary Lemon Hanson Class of 1988

Mary Lemon Hanson - October 17, 2014 at 11:54 PM

M(

“ My deepest sympathies to Mr. Laird's family. Like so many others, He was one of my most favorite teachers at Hayden. He was patient and always kind and soft spoken. He was also a great friend of our family. He will not ever be forgotten. He made a difference in my life. Heaven definitely is now a better place with Mr. Laird there! I'm so sorry for your loss!

Maria Russell (Reeb) - October 17, 2014 at 11:40 PM

CD

“ Mr. Laird was a kind and gentle soul. He will be greatly missed. Rest in peace Mr Laird.

Cheryl Martin Dew - October 17, 2014 at 08:34 PM

C(

“ Mrs Laird and the entire Laird Family,

Thank you God for the gift of Mr Laird. He was an awesome example of a Christian. One of those teachers who doesn't forget your name, always asks about your siblings, ask about you and what you have been doing. HE truly made a difference in so many lives.

He has always been one of my heroes; he even confronted a knife wielding man on the Paris Metro who was threatening us students.

Mrs Laird, you are in my prayers. May God wrap his loving arms around you and hold you close in times of sorrow.

Chris Oshel (Landry) - October 17, 2014 at 07:01 PM

ML

“ Dear Greg and family..So sorry to hear about the passing of your brother. You are in my prayers. Mary Beth Padgett Lyden Class of 1969...

Mary Beth Lyden - October 17, 2014 at 07:00 PM

CF

“ RIP Mr. Laird. You were a wonderful teacher and great man. You will be missed by many.
Carol Martin Flynn

Carol Martin Flynn - October 17, 2014 at 02:58 PM

TA

“ Dear family of Don Laird,

My sympathies to each of you today as you mourn the loss of your beloved. Mr. Laird was by far my favorite teacher at Hayden.

May God bring a smile to each of you to know that Mr. Laird impacted so many people with his caring ways.

Make no mistake the world is a better place because Mr Laird. Enjoy paradise, you are so deserving to be with Our Lord.

Godspeed for your journey home.

Tish Padilla Classs of '76

Tish Padilla Alcala - October 17, 2014 at 09:28 AM

LM

“ *My sincere condolences to the Laird family. Mr. Laird was such a kind and gentle man who really cared about his students. May your family find comfort in knowing how many lives he has impacted over the years. Rest in peace Mr. Laird.*

Linda Swalwell Martin - October 17, 2014 at 09:16 AM

PB

“ *Madame Laird,*

Je suis désolé pour votre perte. Votre mari était très sympathique. Garder vos souvenirs de lui proche de votre Coeur.

Angelique (Arzel Blackwell)

Pamela Blackwell-Nwonye - October 17, 2014 at 09:11 AM

MD

“ *Kay and family, Don was such a kind soul! I remember when I went to work at Hayden and the first time I saw him, I said hi Mr. Laird! To which he replied, it's Don now, we are colleagues. To say he was a favorite teacher to most if not all of us Haydenites is an understatement!! Again my condolences. God Speed Mr. Laird!!! You will be so missed!*

Mary T. Decker - October 17, 2014 at 08:57 AM

MR

“ Mrs. Laird and family,
We were so sorry to learn of Don's passing. What a special man he was. I taught with Don at Hayden 20 years ago, and after not seeing him for many years, I ran into him in Target last month. I very much enjoyed catching up with him, and he spoke lovingly of you. The world was a better place with Don in it, and he will be missed my many. Please know that you and your family are in our thoughts and prayers.
Sincerely,
Alice and Mark Reinert Family

Mark and Alice Reinert - October 17, 2014 at 08:51 AM

CA

“ I am sorry to hear of Mr. Laird's passing. I was a student of Mrs Laird but I have such fond memories of him at THS AFS and French club events. He was a wonderful kind person. Your family is in my thoughts and prayers.

Cathy Wolff Anderson - October 16, 2014 at 10:50 PM

DC

“ So very sorry for Mr. Laird's family. It will probably sound like a broken record, but he was my favorite teacher. He had a way of inspiring us to learn, along with a pretty laid-back attitude. There were times he clearly drew the lines, though. I am a teacher now, and I can't tell you how many times I have recalled his patience and compassion for his students. There are few people who can affect so many.

Denise Clarkin - October 16, 2014 at 10:33 PM

LR

“ My thoughts and prayers are with you! Mr. Laird was one of my favorite teachers, and a role model for me as a teenager! I will never forget his bag of apples he would bring to CC meets!! He was an amazing person and touched so many lives! Lisa Roush (Comstock) Class of 1990

Lisa Roush - October 16, 2014 at 10:24 PM

RS

“ To Kay and the Laird Family,
We were very sad to learn of Don's passing. I was fortunate to know Don as both a student and a colleague and I will always remember his friendly and gentlemanly style. Our Hayden Catholic students prayed for him yesterday during our morning prayer.
Despite missing him, we know that we will have a friendly face to greet us at the gates of Heaven, probably holding a bag of apples to share.
May God Bless,

Rick Strecker - October 16, 2014 at 08:36 PM

NS

“ We were very sorry to hear about Don's passing. He was a kind and gentle man. Our sincere sympathies to Kay and all the Laird family.
Rest in Peace, Don
Dan & Nancy Shaughnessy

Nancy Shaughnessy - October 16, 2014 at 08:04 PM

PG

“ Dear Laird Family- Sorry for the loss of Don. You're in our thoughts and prayers. We always enjoyed visiting with him in Walmart.. Love Pam and Joe

Pam and Joe Garrison - October 16, 2014 at 07:57 PM

PO

“ sorry to hear about Mr.Laird passing away, what a great teacher and a great guy, it was always nice running in to him and talking to him long after graduating, he was an exceptional person, God Bless, Paul Owens class of 1978

paul owens - October 16, 2014 at 07:20 PM

BA

“ Mr. Laird was my favorite teacher by far. He even remembered my name years after I had graduated. He was a person true to his word and inspiring to the many that passed through his classroom. RIP Mr. Laird, Blair Adams class of 1990

Blair E Adams - October 16, 2014 at 06:54 PM

S7

“ Mr. Laird, such a good teacher, gentle man, kind and caring human being. You will be missed by the many students in your classrooms, hallways, and at school activities.

My condolences to your family, may they find comfort in the many memories. Hayden will not be the same without you... Rest in peace Mr. Laird.

Susan Swalwell class of 74 - October 16, 2014 at 02:34 PM

BK

“ Don was a great teacher. he connected with most of us by treating us as piers. We were all his friends. We will all miss him, but not as much as his family. I wish you all comfort and inner peace, He lived life well, as shown through the countless students who will attest.

Brenda Kelsey - October 16, 2014 at 01:48 PM

C1

“ Sincere sympathy to your family.
Mr. Laird was a great man and always took the time if you wanted to talk. Even seeing him years after graduating high school he would remember you and wanted to know what was going on in your life. The students were privileged to have him with us on the HHS Close Up trip to Washington D.C.
Truly a great loss! God Bless!

Christi Crawford Holladay, HHS Class of 1987 - October 16, 2014 at 10:58 AM

B(

“ So sorry to hear about Mr. Laird. He was as you can see by the other posts a good teacher and well liked by many. Peace and comfort from our savior to his family. God Bless.

Barb DeWalt (Tinsley) - October 16, 2014 at 10:41 AM

CC

“ I was so sad to hear about his passing. He was by far one of my favorite teachers at Hayden. He touched so many lives and leaves quite a legacy behind. God bless your family. Crystal Carson Class of 1987

Crystal Carson - October 16, 2014 at 09:39 AM

CV

“ Dear Kay, so very sorry for your loss. Don was such a gentle and caring person. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

Carol Vogel - October 16, 2014 at 09:27 AM

AL

“ My sympathy to Mr. Laird's family. You're in my prayers. Mr. Laird was a nice person and great teacher. He will be missed. Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord. And let the perpetual light shine upon him.

Amy Ledom, Class of 1988

Amy Ledom - October 16, 2014 at 08:14 AM

D(

“ I want to send my condolences and best wishes to the family -- Mr.Laird was a wonderful teacher. I have lived in Arkansas for the last 25 years but my family still lives in Topeka. I lost my mother just a year ago so I know how hard it is on loved ones, take care -- Donna Rachlen (Stadler) class of 1976

Donna Rachlen (Stadler) - October 16, 2014 at 08:05 AM

JF

“ To the Family, Loved Ones, and students who had the pleasure of having Don Laird as an educator at Hayden High:
It is with the deepest of condolences to you all upon hearing of his unexpected passing. Mr. Laird was a wonderful teacher and his first wife Barbara played a big role in my youth. Now after many years apart they are finally reunited in the palm of God's hand. And for all who survive him take solace in knowing you were taught by a fabulous educator and mentor. "Rest In Eternal Peace" Don Laird.

John Finucane - October 15, 2014 at 05:22 PM