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PREVIOUS

Charles Maurice Kimmel Jr.

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Darrow Glaser

Janet Heim Sep 5, 2015



Submitted photo

Darrow and Nita Glaser on a trip to Vancouver, British Columbia, in 2003.

Editor's Note

Each Sunday, The Herald-Mail runs "A Life Remembered." Each story in this continuing series takes a look back — through the eyes of family, friends, co-workers and others — at a member of the community who died recently. Today's "A Life Remembered" is about Darrow Glaser, who died Aug. 15 at the age of 84. His obituary was published in the Aug. 18 edition of The Herald-Mail.

To know Darrow Glaser was to know someone who made the most of life.

He treasured his family and was an avid outdoorsman, a passion he traced back to growing up in Hancock, friends and relatives said.

Darrow came from humble roots. He was the youngest of Louis and Mary Glaser's four children, and everyone knew the Glasers because they owned a variety store in Hancock.

"They were very kind people. Everybody in Hancock seemed to respect them," said Glaser's daughter, Jacqueline "Jackie" Greenawalt of Greencastle, Pa.

The Glasers were a close family, and the children spent their free time fishing and swimming in the Potomac River and hunting.

The Glasers lived in a duplex on Main Street that was filled with merchandise from the store. Darrow was born during the Great Depression and even though his family was poor, he didn't realize it, his children said.

"He never needed material things to make him happy. When he was with family, he was happiest," said daughter Pamela "Pam" Munson of Annapolis.

Darrow was "by far the most intelligent person," said son D. Twain Glaser of Greencastle. His father flunked a grade in high school and was not recommended for college, which his family attributes to him being bored in school.

"He was ornery," Jackie said.

Darrow proved his teachers wrong. After enlisting during the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, he earned a bachelor's degree in history at University of Maryland in three years and completed law school at George Washington University in three years — tasks that usually take four years each to complete.

One of Darrow's fraternity brothers at University of Maryland was Jim Henson, Pam said.

Darrow passed the bar exam on his first try in June 1960, and joined a general law practice in Washington, D.C. It was at a reunion of his Hancock High School class that he got reacquainted with a classmate, whose maiden name was Nita Kerns, whom he dated in high school.

Nita had three children from two previous marriages. She married her first husband not long after graduating from high school, and they had a son and daughter before they divorced.

Her second husband died of a heart attack when their daughter, Jackie, was 18 months old. Darrow also was married briefly, but the marriage ended in divorce.

When Darrow and Nita started dating, she was working at Sears to support her children. The couple married Aug. 6, 1966, and their son, Twain, was born April 21, 1967.

Darrow treated Nita's children as though they were his own, and the girls called him Dad. Oldest child Larry Munson, who called Darrow "Pop," came to live with the Glasers a couple years after they married, when Larry was 16.

"He was Dad to all of us," Pam said.

With children to consider, the Glasers moved back to Hancock and Darrow joined the law practice of Irving Einbinder in Hagerstown.

The Glasers became close friends with Darrow's secretary, Evelyn Miller, and her husband, Rudy, whom the children knew as Aunt Evelyn and Uncle Chief, because Rudy was a chief petty officer.

They socialized and traveled with the couple, who were Twain's godparents and Darrow and Nita's best friends.

Darrow introduced the children to travel, music, the arts and good food, things they had not experienced before Nita married him.

"When Dad married Mom, we had done nothing. He came along and opened the world up to us," Pam said.

"I don't ever remember going on vacation until I was 16," Larry said.

Darrow was a hard person to get out of bed in the morning and was late to work every day, Jackie said.

"But he said he was there when the judge was there," Twain said.

Darrow didn't care about money, so when clients didn't have money to hire an attorney, he worked on the barter system. He got a well-built dog house and several guns, among other things, as payment.

"He never made six figures as a lawyer. That tells you something," Pam said.

Darrow was appointed to replace Judge Fred Wright in the Maryland House of Delegates, and served from 1971 to 1974, while still in private practice in Hagerstown. He received a conservation award for his work as a delegate.

He took Twain to the legislative session and had him sit on his knee, allowing him to push the buttons to vote. Some of the legislative pages baby-sat the Glaser children.

"He was always comfortable around everybody, from the governor to just ordinary people," Larry said in a phone interview.

Darrow then became a judge — first in district court, then circuit court — for the retirement benefits, his children said. He never talked about work at home, turning it off as soon as he left for the day.

At his memorial service, Larry, who lives in Selbyville, Del., said several attorneys in attendance described Darrow as a model judge, well respected for his ability to treat everyone the same in the courtroom.

As a father, he was patient, kind and had a great sense of humor.

"Whenever you got in trouble, you got a lesson. He'd teach you something from it," said Larry, who admitted he was a "pretty ornery kid."

Darrow was a walking encyclopedia and always had a book in his hand, but never gave the children answers to questions, instead making them look up the answers themselves.

"He was never demeaning," Pam said. "He never made you feel dumb, that he was better than you."

They recalled how Nita said Darrow was so smart, but had no common sense.

"In the courtroom, he was totally in charge," Twain said. "At home, he was no way in charge."

Nita became a homemaker after they married. She took care of the decorating decisions and even the purchase of their Brightwood Acres home in 1974, after looking at about 60 houses, a decision that didn't matter to Darrow.

Larry and Pam graduated from Hancock High School, while Jackie and Twain are South Hagerstown High School alumni.

They lived in that home until 1996, when they moved to Summerland Manor in Hagerstown, then to Providence Place and finally to Menno Haven in Chambersburg, Pa., nine years ago, where Nita still lives.

Darrow was always thin, even though he ate dessert every day. Ice cream was a favorite, and after the dinner dishes were cleaned, the children could hear Darrow open the freezer and take out ice cream.

He would add the toppings and eat straight out of the carton, saying he was only going to have "a little dollop," which was usually considerably more.

"He ate well and loved good, healthy food, fresh everything," Jackie said.

He introduced the family to Japanese, Chinese and Mexican cuisines, as well as seafood, and encouraged the children to try new foods, even if it meant shoving a forkful into their mouths, Twain said.

Pam remembered the family's ritual of dressing up and driving 2 1/2 hours to Bush's Chesapeake Inn in Annapolis once a year for a seafood feast. It began with cream-of-crab soup and always included Twain picking out his lobster from the lobster tank.

Every year for 20 years, the Glasers spent a week in in October in Ocean City, Md., after the crowds left, even though it meant taking the children out of school.

Darrow's love for the water led to progressive boat purchases, starting with a two-seater sailboat and canoes, then moving to a Starcraft motorboat that Darrow bought with Larry, which allowed the family to go water skiing.

"He always had a sense of adventure," Larry said.

Water skiing led to family snow skiing at Ski Liberty and Wisp, with Darrow still jumping the moguls at age 65.

"Dad said 'try something new every day,'" Twain said.

His other passion was golf, Jackie said.

"He wasn't very good at it, but he did it with his family," she said.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, he and Larry went golfing once a week, usually playing nine holes at Hagerstown's municipal golf course. It was Darrow who shared his love of politics with Larry, and they talked about politics the entire time.

FDR, Hubert Humphrey, President Kennedy and Winston Churchill were Darrow's heroes. He was a Democrat, despite being from rural Western Maryland.

He owed his compassionate side to the way he grew up, Larry said.

Darrow's broad range of interests included art ,and he was a big supporter of the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts, serving on its board of directors.

A big University of Maryland fan, Darrow and his family went to every Maryland home football game for years, Pam said.

In about 2000, Darrow was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. He didn't really speak for the last six or seven years of his life.

Still, his children recalled the life lessons and examples he set.

"If anybody could have a hero, he was mine," said Larry, a sentiment echoed by his siblings.

"He was the best dad in the world. I don't know how we lucked out," Jackie said.

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