

# The Insider

FALL 2014

## THE TURKEY BOWL COMMITTEE

**Editor's Note:** For those who missed Uncle Gene's funeral this summer, below is the eulogy given by his son, Bill Nicolls. We miss you, Uncle Gene



*"He wanted to be called "Sam". When Dad was born, his mother selected the name Eugene Julian"*

Uncle Gene with his 5 great-grandchildren



### Eulogy for Uncle Gene

By Bill Nicolls

He wanted to be called "Sam". When Dad was born, his mother selected the name Eugene Julian for him and he never could get over how she could have come up with such an odd-ball moniker. She supposedly told him that she had used all the good names for her two previous sons. However, she gave birth to yet another, following Dad and named him Donald James; two of the most normal names you'll find on the list. He used to tell me that he'd tell himself that if he

ever had a son, he was going to give him a normal name. Thus I was named Bill.

Around the neighborhood though, many people called him Sam. Good ol' Sam. The man who would drop anything he was doing to help you with a project, or to plan a block party, corn roast, or square dance. He was admired by many of the neighborhood kids because our house (along with Andy Carr's place) became an amusement park of sorts. Andy, who just died recently, built a fort and play-

house in his yard and Dad built a sports complex. We had the biggest concrete basketball court in the entire area which also served as a badminton court. Dad added a shuffleboard court as well. We had an ice skating rink in the winter. He built ramps for us to do daredevil stunts with our bikes. Helped us make soap-box cars to push down the sidewalks terrorizing little old ladies along the way. He set up a model train table in our basement that we enjoyed creating Addams Family-type train wrecks upon. He built a Barbie dream house for Pattye Ann and her friends even before the Mattel Co. thought of the idea.

All kids were welcome, and boy, did they congregate. There were candy tosses from the airing deck; movie nights outside projected on a bed sheet attached to the garage door, Trips to the dump in a rented Sparky's

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The Over-Forties Superstars after the 1971 Snow Bowl. Uncle Gene was MVP of Turkey Bowl IV, the first T-Bowl played at Nicolls Field.

*a Jack Lemmon film in the early '60s called "Good Neighbor Sam" and I thought, "Man, that's MY Dad"*

The Friday after Thanksgiving in New Castle, 1988



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trailer where all the kids would pile in to keep the garbage from flying out and bounce all the way back home in

the empty trailer. Of course, today he would be arrested for that but we all had a blast and all the other neighborhood adults saw no harm in it. Good old-fashioned fun. He would rent a cottage on an Irish Hills lake and rather than just spend the week relaxing, he would have a different family come up for each day of the week and entertain them with boating, skiing, fishing, and swimming. By the time he started renting the Crooked Lake cottage; it was come one, come all.

That was Dad. Always happiest when surrounded by family and friends or working on a project. When he had nothing on his plate, he would go help someone else with their project. Always ready to sling a shovel or throw a hammer.

After he moved away from Hazelhurst, my wife Pattye, took it upon herself to keep him busy by making him her

personal contractor, having him build things all OVER our house.

As an adult, I saw him in yet a new light. Dad was no pushover. He was tough when he needed to be and ran a tight ship as they used to say. Whenever Pattye Ann and I got on his last nerve, we paid the price we richly deserved. However a new mellowness overtook him with the birth of his 3 grandchildren and later with his 5 great-grands. Grandma Nic had written him a card at the birth of Jessica and said that he would discover an entirely new kind of love with this grandchild. Did she ever nail THAT prediction. As I watched him interact with the 8 little ones that came after us, I saw him morph from Drill Sergeant into Captain Kangaroo.

He absolutely adored every one of those kids and it pleased me so to see that look of utter joy he had when they showed up. He played the role of "Grampa Spoils-a-Lot" to the hilt. In fact, he really spoiled us all. He was a generous man with his money but more importantly, his time. Whenever you got in a bind, the wallet came out. Whenever an issue arose that needed an assist; there he was.

Dad, like so many of his

generation, was industrious with a tremendous work ethic, and provided a stable, well-maintained household. He loved my mother with his whole heart for nearly 60 years. He raised us in the proper way to be respectful to others and be thankful for what we have. He was a fine role-model for the man I have strived to become. My only regret is that his chromosome for hair wasn't a stronger influence in my development. Dad had as much hair on his head the day he died as he did when he was a teenager.

Dad never took us to many movies, mainly because Mom got headaches watching them. But I do remember an old Jack Lemmon film we saw in the early '60s called "Good Neighbor Sam" and I thought, "Man, that's MY Dad. He's Good Neighbor Sam. I was very proud to have him as my father; to have a cool dad who did stuff that was "neato". A dad who others wished they had. Today, the name he didn't care for belongs to his grandson and the name he preferred is carried on by his youngest great-grandson. And the rest of us carry the cherished memories of the man called, Dad, Grandpa, Grampy, and Sam.