

Tribute to Norman Sandvoss (1933-2010)

(June 7, 2010)

We are all mourning the loss of Norm at such an early age (67) and will miss him very much as our attorney, but mostly because he was such a wonderful man and a super friend.

Norm was one of a kind. I don't think I ever knew anyone who loved sports as much as he did (well, maybe his buddy, John Flynn). He played tennis, and was an avid follower of the Buckeyes (his alma mater) and the Indians. He would go anywhere to see his teams play... and did (California and Texas for the Buckeyes...and all over the United States for the Tribe).

In 1998, Carlyn and Ben Bassham were living in Italy, where Ben was teaching art history, and purchased a new car. It was to be delivered to Baltimore shortly after their return to the States. Ben asked if I would go with him to Baltimore to get the car and drive his other car home. Since I had taught at the Naval Academy for eight summers (1976-84) and was very familiar with the area, I gladly accepted Ben's offer. I contacted Ken Higgins, an Academy history professor who had become my friend while teaching there, and he suggested the Ben and I stop by Annapolis and spend a Saturday sailing the Chesapeake with him and his wife, Vira, on their new thirty seven foot sailboat. We did and had a wonderful time.

Upon our return to Kent, we told Norm about our trip and Chesapeake sailing adventure. Norm got excited and suggested that if I could arrange another sailing adventure, he would obtain tickets for the opening of the new Camden Yards baseball stadium in Baltimore. **Thus the famous Norm Sandvoss Baseball trips originated in 1989 and continued until this past month (with another trip to Camden Yards to see the Indians)!**

The first trip was memorable! Tom Blosser and Larry Wright joined Norm, Ben and I and we had a wonderful time. The highlights of the trip were seeing Randy Johnson pitch for Seattle and our sailing adventure. At the end of a long day of sailing we docked at a seafood restaurant across the Severn River from the Naval Academy. Norm, a hater of any food from the sea, ordered a steak and all of us ordered hard shell crabs, the restaurant's specialty. We were drinking beer, and Norm began to use the empty beer bottles to build a fort around his plate to ward off the many empty crab shells. We had ordered a bushel of hard shell crabs, and soon the pile of shells reached the top of the beer bottles. There was Norm, in his fort, eating a steak, which he deemed shoe leather, warning all of us that we would pay for treating him this way! Actually, Norm's predictions came sooner than this practical joker expected, as most of us got a reaction to the hard shell crabs and suffered a rash over our bodies for the next few days! Norm had the last laugh!!

Norm had one of the widest arrays of friends of anyone...fellow lawyers, judges, Republican Committee colleagues, tennis partners, neighbors, baseball trip buddies, Buckeye trip buddies, Canadians he met on one of Linda and his trips (and were friends for life), friends at Ray's Place (Norm's favorite bar), folks from Faith Lutheran Church, Kent State University sports fans, Robinson Memorial Hospital Board friends.....**and everyone else that he met!** He loved about everyone he met and they loved him too.

When we heard that Norm had died, Ruth and I wondered who might be giving the eulogies and started naming folks we thought might be honored. Ruth and I kept naming friends of Norm's and the list grew and grew...knowing that Norm was close friends with so many. We settled on John Flynn, the obvious choice, and Bill Lentz (Norm's law partner), Larry Wright and David Dix. I said, "Larry won't do it as he stays in the background," but I was wrong and Larry did a wonderful job. (Larry and David are quiet listeners...just the type of friends that an extroverted person like Norm needed to listen to him!) David's tribute in his newspaper was wonderful...demonstrating the breadth of Norm's impact in our community. John told special personal stories about Norm and Bill shared some of his and Norm's deep spiritual commitments. The church and calling hours were packed...demonstrating everyone's love of Norm and Linda.

Finally, Norm was blessed to have Linda and Chris...and now Linda is blessed to have Chris....and the many friends they had as a couple. Linda and Norm lived a loving, action-packed life...as Linda said, “We packed more into each year than most folks do in a whole marriage!” I think she was right.

Norm died too soon! He had so much more to do. More cases, more trips, more friends to visit, and much more living with, and loving, Linda and his family. But that is not to be! Norm lived a life full of love and happiness....he lived a life worth living. He set the bar high for all of us to emulate. Although most of us won't be able to meet his action-packed standard, Norm is looking down on us...cheering us on!

Norm Sandvoss' life was a gift we all appreciated!

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