



## Mr. Donald Paxton McPherson, III

August 9, 1941 - November 20, 2022

### Donald Paxton McPherson III

Donald Paxton McPherson III of Baltimore died unexpectedly Sunday morning November 20, 2022, at home. Ann Teaff, his wife of 26 years, was by his side. A gentleman and a gentle man, Don was kind and thoughtful, a person of the highest integrity who in all aspects of his life was a man for others.

Born in Gettysburg, PA, August 9, 1941, Don was the son of the late Janet Russell McPherson and The Honorable Donald Paxton McPherson, Jr. He attended elementary school in Gettysburg and graduated from Gilman School in Baltimore. He went on to graduate from Princeton University and Columbia University Law School. He kept lifelong friends from these experiences.

Don had deep roots in Gettysburg. His 5th great-grandfather, Robert McPherson, born in Scotland, immigrated to the Pennsylvania Colony in 1729 and was among the first Scotch-Irish Presbyterian settlers to inhabit what is now Adams County. Edward McPherson, Don's great-grandfather, became an influential citizen of Gettysburg. He studied law with Thaddeus Stevens, served as a U.S. Congressman, was appointed Clerk of the House of Representatives, edited a major newspaper, owned a farm on the Gettysburg battlefield, and became a close ally of Lincoln and advocate for the abolition of slavery.

Following in a line of public servants, Don's father practiced law in Gettysburg for over fifty years, served in the Pennsylvania State Senate, and was appointed by President Eisenhower to the Interstate Commerce Commission. Don's mother also came from early colonists who settled for many generations in Branford, Connecticut. The only woman in her Yale University Law School Class of 1935, she practiced law with her father in New Haven before her marriage.

Don joined Piper and Marbury, now DLA Piper, in 1966 where he practiced law for 55 years specializing in real estate development, commercial leasing, and public finance. Mentoring young associates was one of Don's pleasures and special gifts, teaching the technical aspects of the practice of law and setting by example with his courteous style of practice. Don was respected for his sound judgment, insightful wisdom, and above all a humble, uncluttered, and pure dedication to his clients, the firm, and his friends.

Don was also an attentive family man, home for dinner with his wife and children each night and active with them on the weekends. He took great interest in his children's interests, as well as their friends. One of the greatest sadnesses of Don's life was losing his son David in 2016.

From David, Don had one grandson, Tyler, with whom Don was as attentive and delighted as a father. He and Ann took Tyler on many enriching adventures, but it was also everyday moments like driving Tyler to school or watching his squash lessons that created a meaningful bond for both of them.

While a practicing lawyer, Don devoted equal priority to pro bono work, providing legal assistance for people in need through Maryland Volunteer Lawyers, work he continued his whole life. After retirement he also joined Just Advice, a project of the University of Maryland School of Law that aims to

increase justice by providing free legal advice to those without the resources to hire a private attorney. Don assisted nearly 1,000 individuals and was working on a legal document for one of his Just Advice clients the evening before he died.

Shortly after Don's marriage to Ann Teaff in 1996, Ann became Head of School at Harpeth Hall in Nashville, and Don was a faithful supporter of her career there. He worked in Baltimore and traveled to Nashville, never missing a weekend together in 16 years. He faithfully came to every function on campus - athletic events, performing arts concerts and plays, proms and dances, as well as multiple alumnae regional events, and always signaled his genuine happiness in being there. Don's pride in Ann was such that he often had tears in his eyes when she spoke at Harpeth Hall events.

Don valued his community, and he worked for it. Living in one house his whole adult life, Don served on numerous Roland Park Civic League and Community Foundation committees, provided pro bono legal assistance for the restoration of the historic Roland Park Water Tower, and was an early champion of the Hillside Park initiative that turned a private 20-acres into the first city park of its size in Baltimore in more than a century. On the Board of the Mount Vernon Place Conservancy, he helped restore Baltimore's historic Washington Monument. In Gettysburg, Don was a major advocate for the Adams County Historical Society's new museum to open in April 2023.

Don was a lifelong learner with a wellspring of curiosity, which sparked his wonderful countenance and bright outlook on life. He read widely, and in fact, his last purchase the afternoon before he died was a better small light by which to read in the early morning hours. In his forties he started taking courses through Johns Hopkins University's adult education, and immediately several friends joined him. Later, they created their own program, The Iliad –

courses in history, music, drama, literature, art history, and music taught by academics from leading institutions in the Baltimore and Washington area. Thousands of people have since taken those courses.

Don was an athlete who swam, ran, or walked every morning. In the company of family and friends Don also traveled extensively in the United States and six continents. His favorite mode of travel – to be closer to people and the land – was bicycle. He organized numerous self-supported bike trips with friends, pedaling by day and camping at night.

Don will make his final trip to his beloved Gettysburg for a funeral service at Gettysburg Presbyterian Church on December 2 at 11am followed by burial at Evergreen Cemetery. There will be a reception following.

December 17 at 11am there will be a memorial service in Baltimore at Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church in Bolton Hill, followed by a reception with the family.

Don was predeceased by his son David Russell McPherson and his brother Scott McPherson. He is survived by his beloved wife, Ann Teaff of Baltimore; daughter Cynthia McPherson (James Ryder) of El Cerrito, CA; his first wife, Barbara Breslau (Ray) of Orinda, CA; brother Edward McPherson (Sally) of Dallas, TX; grandson Tyler McPherson of Baltimore, the son of deceased son David; David's former wife, Anna Gyarmathy of Baltimore and Tyler's siblings, Richard and Flora, whom Don embraced as his own when Anna and the family moved from Hungary to Baltimore in 2021; a niece, nephew, and two great nieces.

Friends may consider making a memorial gift to the Gettysburg Presbyterian Church or the Adams County Historical Society.



# Cemetery Details

## Evergreen Cemetery

799 Baltimore Street  
Gettysburg, PA 17325

# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

DEC 2. 11:00 AM (ET)

Gettysburg Presbyterian Church  
208 Baltimore Street  
Gettysburg, PA 17325

## Memorial Service

DEC 17. 11:00 AM (ET)

Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church  
1316 Park Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21217

# Tribute Wall

CA

“ I haven't seen Don in 20 years and I knew him for only a brief time when I was a brand new associate at Piper. My limited interactions with Don were memorable because he was so kind and generous with his time. My recollection is that he was just such a decent man in the best way possible. I am sorry to hear of his passing.

Cate Allen - December 06, 2022 at 10:51 AM

PS

“ Donald was my neighbor and I often saw him swimming at the Roland Park pool in the summer. He once consulted me on an immigration matter, and he was a very interesting, engaging individual. He also showed his classic train set to our daughter when she was just three years old. I was sad to hear of his passing.

Peter Smith - November 29, 2022 at 03:35 PM

JD

Don was a kind, lovely man. We knew each other from the bus, and all through the years I'd see him in the neighborhood and have a chance to talk with him. My husband and I saw him many times and lately every Wednesday morning walking at Gilman when we ran the track. I am so saddened by his passing. We've lost a bright light in the world. I'm going to try to emulate his kindness and compassion. Rest in peace, dear friend. 🙏

Jeri Delambo - December 01, 2022 at 09:48 AM

EM

*I had the good fortune of being Don's colleague at DLA Piper for the first 21 years of my career. Don had a remarkable ability to engage with young professionals (he patiently explained the Rule against Perpetuities to me when I was a young associate working on one of his projects) and he was also a great partner. Don was smart, level headed, humane and most of all good hearted. Practicing law was an important part of Don's life, but only one dimension of who he was. After I left DLA Piper, every time I ran into Don, whether at a MVLS event, Eddie's or the Roland Park Pool, we resumed the conversation about family and life right where it left off. He will be missed by all who were fortunate enough to have known him.*

*Eric Miller*

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**Eric Miller** - December 02, 2022 at 11:41 AM