



Donald Cary Kensinger

September 23, 1937 - March 16, 2020

Bluefield, WV- Donald Carey Kensinger, prominent musician and native of Bluefield, died Monday, March 16, 2020 in a local nursing home.

Born September 23, 1937, he was the youngest son of James Allen and Faye Fannon Kensinger.

A 1955 graduate of Beaver High School, he received his bachelor's degree in music education from Concord College and a Master's degree from Radford College. He also studied at Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, Michigan State University, and Westminster Choir College.

After beginning his teaching career as a traveling music teacher in Mercer County, he moved to Bluefield High School as Choral Music Director. In the tradition of his high school mentor Elizabeth Shelton, he boasted an enrollment of two hundred singers in his choir. Advancing for a short tenure at Concord College, he transferred to Bluefield State College as instructor of music education courses.

Forever a community servant, he founded and directed the Flat Top National Bank Christmas choir. For ten years he served as musical director for Summit Players. When the current Fine Arts Center was threatened with demolition, he helped raise funds for its restoration and renovation. In more recent years, he played a major role in securing two concert grand pianos for the Bluefield Fine Arts stage. One of his proudest achievements was serving as choir director/organist at First Presbyterian Church for fifty-seven years. He was also an ordained deacon and elder at his church. In recent years, he assisted the local Jewish synagogue as accompanist for their special services. After his retirement from Bluefield State College, he organized and directed the BSC Community Chorus. The recipient of some well-deserved honors, he was elected Teacher of the Year at Bluefield State College. Upon his retirement from that institution in 2000, he was named Professor Emeritus. Proudly, he was elected to the Bluefield High School Hall of Fame in 2014.

Survivors include his wife of thirty-eight years, Eleanor Douthat Kensinger; a sister, Janice Heath (Raeford) of Summerfield, North Carolina. He is also survived by a host of nieces and nephews, by his "angel" caregiver, Evelyn Davis, and by his felines that he loved dearly.

A Service of Witness to the Resurrection will be held for Don on Sunday November 1, 2020 at 3:00 p.m. with Pastor Maggie Rust officiating. Attendance at this service will be restricted to family and members of the congregation. At a later date, a service to celebrate his life and music will be open to the public.

Gifts in Don's memory may be made to First Presbyterian Church, to the Bluefield High School Foundation, or to Second Chance for Cats.

Those wishing to share memories or condolence messages with the family may do so by visiting <http://www.MercerFuneralHome.com> Mercer Funeral Home & Crematory is serving the family of Mr. Donald Carey Kensinger.

Comments



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Donald Cary Kensinger.



October 30, 2020 at 05:16 PM



“ Donnie Kensinger was a consummate musician. He was an accomplished organist, pianist, choral director, and teacher. If a student lacked funding, he provided lessons gratis. As an accompanist, he was superb. It was a great honor to work with him on numerous occasions. He spoke of wanting to take a Viking cruise. I so hope that was fulfilled. Charlie joins in sincere condolences to his dear wife, Eleanor, and other members of his family.

Hazel Cauthen

Hazel Peery Cauthen - July 06, 2020 at 08:28 PM



“ Donny was my cousin. His Aunt was Matilda Kensinger Walker who was my great grandmother. When I was little and would come in the summer to visit my grandparents Wes and Dorothy Willis my mom would always take me and my younger brother to visit Donny and Eleanor. It was like going to a magical world with different piano's and he'd let my brother bang on them. As we got older we didn't get to come down alot. However when we did we'd always visit Donny. I had started coloring my hair red and he'd always tell me the older I got the more I looked like Mathilda. I'll miss his kind and gentle spirit and his love of cats! He was a beautiful soul and I'm sure God has drafted him for his heavenly choir. Our condolences to Eleanor and other family. With love Crystal and Kenny Collis.

Crystal Collis - May 21, 2020 at 07:39 PM



“ Sending sincere condolences to family. Rest In Peace Mr. Kensinger. My wonderful piano teacher and choral director. Always so dedicated, fair and caring. Heaven has surely gained an angel.

Linda R. Johnson



Linda Johnson - April 24, 2020 at 12:58 AM



“ I met Donnie & Eleanor at Summit Players in the early 80's, when I was 11. Like so many of those great players, Donnie was very gracious to me. I really liked him and appreciate his companionship. Thank you Donnie for your fun loving spirit. You are in my thoughts Eleanor and your loved ones during your time of grief.
-Shawn Jackson

Loki Jackson - March 21, 2020 at 08:58 AM



“ Donnie was so welcoming and loving to Jim and to me. He was such a kind, sweet, witty and delightfully mischievous gentleman. Donnie was an outstanding musician and I will treasure the times we made music together. Most of all, I treasure his friendship and treating us as if we had ALWAYS belonged to our adopted home in WV. He was outspoken and I loved that! Naturally, he loved to talk about music with me, but he also loved to talk politics. His sense of humor was priceless and I send my deepest condolences to Eleanor and All of his FAMILY and All Who Loved Him.



Alexa Schlimmer - March 19, 2020 at 10:46 AM



“ Donnie was a mentor and friend to me. He gave me many opportunities for performance and accompanied me on my masters concert over twenty years ago. I remember his stewardship of his cats, along with his wife Eleanor. Both of them hosted me many times for dinner after rehearsals. I particularly remember he loved to grill Vidalia onions. I'll treasure my time with him, musically and as friends. Thank you Donnie.

Chip Newton - March 18, 2020 at 11:44 PM



“ Donnie was my piano teacher at Concord, and I sang with the Flat Top Bank Choir, under his direction, for a few years. He also played the organ for our wedding. I always admired him! He was a wonderful piano teacher, and I learned a lot about conducting from him. We performed together at several events through the years. He was so gracious and such a gentleman. Our community has lost an outstanding musician, but his influence lives on in many of us!! Thank you Donnie!!!

Marty Chaffins - March 18, 2020 at 08:45 PM



“ Chip graduated from high school with Donnie. We could see him failing ,in church ,for about two years. Now he is in a better place. He will be deeply missed. Our thoughts and prayers to the family.

Chip & Georgann Simmons

Chip & Georgann Simmons - March 17, 2020 at 10:57 AM



“ Donnie came to Bluefield High School my senior year. He was replacing the beloved Elizabeth Shelton and as a Black student who in some ways had been protected by Miss Shelton, I was a little leary of what I would be facing with a new choir director. How foolish of me, Donnie was not only a talented and gifted musician and a wonderful choir director, he was also a kind and loving man. I saw him for the last time in the summer of 1972 when I spent several weeks in Bluefield with my family. We went out to dinner with several other choir members and had a delightful evening which ended with us singing around his piano.
May God bless all of you as you cherish the memory of this delightful man

Madeline Sinkford Greene
Bluefield High School/ class of 1962

madeline sinkford greene - March 16, 2020 at 08:11 PM



“only precious and kind memories of Mr. Kensinger! from choir student, 'Libby' Roaten (Miller)

Libby Miller - March 17, 2020 at 04:56 AM



“ When the word “music “ was mentioned in Bluefield, Donnie Kensinger was the name that automatically came to anyone’s mind. He touched so many lives with his talent and his willingness to share it with all who were fortunate enough to sing in one of his choirs has enriched our lives beyond measure. I am blessed beyond belief to have been able call this amazing man and his equally amazing wife, Eleanor,my friends.... both forces to be reckoned with! I miss you already, Donnie-and Eleanor, my love, thoughts and prayers are with you always.

Rebecca Allen - March 17, 2020 at 06:09 AM



“ I am so sorry to hear of Mr. Kensinger's passing. I learned to love and respect him at Bluefield High as a person and as the wonderful director of our choir.

Frank Carter - March 17, 2020 at 09:38 PM



“ I went thru 12 yrs of school with Donnie. He was always a "class act" and well respected by all classmates.He was very talented and was always an asset to Bluefield.

Jim Gregory

James Gregory - March 17, 2020 at 11:25 PM



“ Mr. Kensinger was great for Bluefield State, good to our students, and awesome to work with student and community programming through BSC. The College community continues to miss working with him. Joan Buchanan, retired from BSC

Joan Buchanan - March 17, 2020 at 11:45 PM



“ So sorry about Donnie's passing. We will miss his beautiful music and his wonderful sense of humor. Donnie. and Eleanor's Christmas programs presented for the Bluefield Garden Club each year were always a hit.

Claire Alexander

John and Claire Alexander - March 18, 2020 at 01:39 AM



“ Donnie Kensinger impacted the lives of so many in Bluefield. He led the music program at First Presbyterian Church. He took care of the organ and led a campaign to expand the instrument. The choir at Bluefield High School was always one of the best in the state under Donnie's leadership. We were always expected to produce the best music and we did. As a young musician he was always encouraging to me in my pursuit of music. From the Flat Top Bank Christmas choir to his college choirs Donnie Kensinger was Bluefield's musician.

Charlie Belcher BHS 1967

Charles Belcher - March 18, 2020 at 06:25 AM



“ Donny Was always a class act . He was loved by all who really knew him . So long ole friend you will be missed Fred Bryant class of 55 . .

Fred Bryant - March 18, 2020 at 03:11 PM



“ Don was a very talented man, who also became a good friend to many. He was a very special musician and will live in our hearts forever.

Gail Lloyd - March 18, 2020 at 08:03 PM



“ Dear Eleanor and Family, I am so sorry about the loss of Donnie. He was so special and I liked him very much. You are in my thoughts and prayers.

Dorothy Chudina - March 19, 2020 at 02:37 PM



“ I'm sad at the loss of Mr. Kensinger. I worked with him at Bluefield State and he was a great musician, instructor and advocate for BSC and the community. He saved my wedding day back in 1994, my pianist was in the hospital and I called him in a panic, he told me to calm down, asked what time was my wedding and he would be there. Rest in peace Donnie Kensinger, you will be greatly missed but not forgotten.

Susan Shrader - March 25, 2020 at 07:23 AM



“ I will sadly miss my long time friend and neighbor as I know many other people will. Don and I lived three houses apart and I first met him at 4 years old or younger. We started first grade together at Fairview School. We both took piano lessons from a Mrs. Crawford in uptown Bluefield. I quit and joined the Fairview Band. Don of course practiced a lot and became the wonderful musician that everyone loved. I remember sitting in his home and listening to him play a piece for two pianos. He first recorded the one piano piece and then played the recording back and played along with the recording. Amazing talent. Eleanor you have my deepest sympathy for your loss. I last saw Don at the nursing home and he recognized me and shook my hand. It is hard to realize that I will see him no more.

Kenneth Gray - March 29, 2020 at 11:58 PM