

Local Leader Recounts Father's Lessons After Alzheimer's Claims Life



Donald S. Brady, who died at the age of 85 on June 14, 2016, was the father of prominent High Desert community leader and business owner Joseph W. Brady. Photo submitted by Joseph W. Brady.

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Prominent community figure and businessman Joseph W. Brady learned what makes “a great work ethic” from his father, who recently passed away after more than a year-long battle with Alzheimer’s disease.

Donald Sheridan Brady was 85 on the evening of June 14, when his eldest son, President/CEO of The Bradco Companies, received a heart-wrenching message.

Joseph Brady was fulfilling the duties of one of his roles in the High Desert, attending a Victor Valley College board meeting as a trustee. His father’s nurse was keeping him updated on his status.

“She texted me in closed session and asked if she could administer a tad more morphine and I said yes,” Brady said. “At 5:47, I said ‘Are we okay?’ and she said ‘No.’”

Brady traveled to West Los Angeles, where his father had died within one mile of where he had lived and worked since 1961.

Donald Brady was “an attorney, financial planner and state planner,” his son said, and the successful businessman behind Don Mar Financial Company, which he had founded more than 40 years ago.

A law school graduate from Loyola University, Brady also played football for Stanford University as an undergrad, and was even drafted into the NFL, though he never played.

“Not many friends got to see sports like I did,” Joseph Brady said, recounting his childhood. “Dodger games, the Rams — my dad was a huge Rams fan... He played football with Chuck Taylor,” Brady said, adding that he also played baseball and was a scratch golfer.

As his father’s dementia and overall health worsened, Brady decided to reach out to Vince Ferragamo, the Rams’ last quarterback to play in a Super Bowl, and he agreed to visit.

“(My dad) had held on four or five months longer than what the doctors expected, and one person to thank for that is Vince Ferragamo,” Brady said. “He brought my dad a signed football. My dad was like a little kid waiting for Christmas.”

“He spent an hour with him and they had a great time. That gave my dad a shot of energy, but ultimately I think his body then succumbed to the impacts dementia has on the brain.”

While he was young, Donald Brady was always in good health — “five-foot-ten, 252 pounds, incredible shape” — his son described, and “very tough.”

“No ifs, ands or buts,” Joseph Brady quoted one of his father’s common sayings. “He’d say ‘As long as you have feet underneath this table, you’ll do as you’re told.’”

Brady said he didn’t blame their father for having high expectations, however.

“When we all got together, we realized we were pretty damn lucky,” Brady said. “He taught us good ethics, morals and values... accountability, responsibility. My dad used to say ‘Look at the man in the mirror.’”

Beneath the toughness, Donald Brady also had a heart for charity.

“If you see it when you’re young, it sticks with you. My dad taught us that charity starts outside the house,” Brady said. “(His job) afforded my mom to do a lot in the philanthropic community and my dad was big about giving.”

His father’s service to his community was an example to Joseph Brady, who moved to the High Desert on May 13 of 1988, when he began The Bradco Companies, a commercial brokerage firm.

“I was really interested in creating jobs — I was focused on the survival and development of where I was going to live, work and play. From time to time when I’d talk to be dad about what I was doing, he was always encouraging, but he never told me what to do.”

Donald Brady is survived by seven children, 13 grandchildren and his wife, Lucia H. Brady.

In a Facebook post to announce his father's passing, which Brady described as "a very humbling experience" to receive an abundance of support and prayer in return from, he wrote that weekly visits in the weeks before his death allowed him "much needed closure" in the relationship.

"Thank you dad, for the man you were, the man you made me and the man that I will continue to be living my life with the principles that you taught me," Brady wrote. "I love you and peace be with you."

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