



***Donald grew up in the 30s and 40s in Rainelle, West Virginia – The Heart of Appalachia. We're talking a lot of coal, a lot of lumber, and well... that's about it.***

***Donald would tell us stories about growing up hunting, wrestling with friends, doing chores, and generally getting into all sorts of trouble. He once told us about the time he was home alone and found a jar of beets. Being the precocious young man that he was, he decided he'd open them up and then proceeded to eat every last one. There really was no need for punishment, as he became incredibly sick and never touched a beet again.***

***Donald recalled the old-fashioned form of punishment (which he had the pleasure of experiencing), referred to as "Go get me a switch." Not only was young Don told to go out into the woods and fetch a switch/stick, but what he brought back was then used on him for a good "butt whooping." Always clever and devious, Don would bring back the smallest stick he could find, only to be told to head on back into the woods and find a stick "as round as his thumb."***

***During his days at Rainelle High, Don was quite the athlete. Playing tailback for the football team, he was known by his teammates as "Bucky." Although Don was on the smaller side, he was fast, ornery, and agile. Back in the day, they did NOT wear a lot of protective gear. That included NO facemask. It's a wonder he stayed a handsome man after that. You always take stories like "I was a damn good football player." with a grain of salt. Sort of like "I walked to school uphill, both ways." But we knew that Don did NOT make up this story when one of our brothers got an email from one of his classmates last year. He said, "Bucky was one hell of a football player".***

***Don decided to join the Air Force instead of working the mines or the sawmills, straying away from the path all previous Smith men had gone down.***

***Donald Keith Smith enlisted in the Air Force on February 28, 1948, and was sent to basic training at San Antonio, Texas, in March of 1948. Later he went to Electronic School and Repeater School in Bellevue, Illinois.***

***Don later recounted "I arrived in January 1949, for my first posting at Offutt AFB, Nebraska. It was during a terrible winter."***

***"Later that year in Aug of 1949, I was assigned to a detachment at the ammunition factory site in Mead, Nebraska, where all long-range communication equipment was located. Back then SAC headquarters had only been here since August of 1948. I worked on repeaters, radio, and teletype equipment."***

**He met Marie Cernik at the Mead Ordnance Plant and often went dancing at the Dance Island Ballroom at Wanahoo Park in Wahoo while stationed in Mead, Nebraska.**

**Donald Keith Smith married Marie Magdalene Carol Cernik on June 10, 1950, in Wahoo, Nebraska, when he was 19 years old and Marie was 19.**

**Don's favorite stories follow:**

**"I was at work when the Air Force called and said I was scheduled for the Korea deployment so 'Where are you?' I had checked the orders that had been posted and I know damn well I wasn't on it to go. But I was going, and I had about 45 minutes to get to town, pack my gear and get back. Marie was pregnant with Mark, and I thought for sure she was going to miscarry, but she hung on. We took off for the farm and had Ray (our uncle) drive us to the base and just made it in time. We got on a truck to take us to Offutt Air Force Base and started to pull out when the orderly room clerk came running out yelling and said the shipment had been canceled. That was a relief since it was December of 1950, just after the Chinese had jumped in, so nobody was very eager to go."**

**After leaving the Air Force in 1952, Don started the next Monday at the same plant as a Civil Service Contractor. Don told us, "The plant closed two years later, and I was offered a transfer to White Sands, New Mexico. But I had no desire to go there (A-bombs you know) so I saw an advertisement for IBM. I had no idea what they did or who they were, but they were looking for guys trained in electronics, so I interviewed and got a job. Took a \$1000/year pay cut, but thank God, I took the job."**

**Don spent his entire career at IBM and never moved out of Omaha, Nebraska, sacrificing promotions along the way so that the family could remain in the only place they'd known. He worked there for 35 years.**

**Raising six sons had its joys, challenges, and many stories as well.**

**We all played sports of some type and dad was always involved and from different angles, whether from the bench as a coach or from the stands, sometimes from right behind the backstop, as a fan.**

**After moving to Omaha, they were very involved in the church. Founding members of St. Joan of Arc parish where we all attended grade school.**

**As we started to attend Archbishop Ryan High School, they became involved there including mom working there for several years.**

***Dedication to the church continued when they became involved in the new St. Wenceslaus parish. They helped start the Primetimers group, which is still active today.***

***Injuries and broken bones were not uncommon. Once the family physician was late to deal with one brother because another brother had broken an arm.***

***After having 6 sons, and then 6 grandsons, they were wondering if they would ever have a girl in the family. When the first granddaughter was born, they asked to talk to a nurse to ensure they were not being messed with.***

***The family has continued to grow. Now with 22 grandkids, 20 great-grandkids (plus one on the way). Don always enjoyed seeing the kids. Unfortunately, COVID put a big damper on that for all of us.***

***Marie and Don were both avid golfers and bowlers. Frequently bowling in state tournaments with some of the Westgate crew. In addition to this, they traveled the world extensively.***

***The family lost Marie on the Fourth of July in 2001.***

***It was Marie and Don's time with the Primetimers that first introduced them to Lee Weis. After Marie's passing, Don and Lee became close and married on May 2, 2003.***

***Don and Lee continued to travel and enjoy life. One of their favorite things to do was to go to dinner at Oscar's, Clancy's, or The Good Life.***

***After they moved into the Elk Ridge Assisted Living facility and they continued their dinners out. When Don stopped driving, we would take them out to dinner whenever possible. They used Lyft for a while as well. During the early days of COVID, they even escaped the facility and turned up at Oscar's. The bartender called a family member, and we were able to retrieve them.***

***Don and Lee enjoyed traveling to Cancun and over time they took both the Smith and Weis families with them. Don loved spending time with Lee's family and they embraced him with open arms. He loved it when Carol called him a stud, as he reminded us many occasions. Lee somehow brought out the best in Don and we will be forever grateful for loving him so much.***

***Two final stories about Don. One of his largest customers that he supported was Strategic Air Command, also known as SAC Headquarters. That's where all the nuclear weapons were controlled from back in those days. During both the Cuban***

***Missile Crisis and JFK's assassination, he was in "lockdown" many, many stories below the ground for several days both times. Poor Marie had those darn six boys to contend with. The kids ranged from Mark at 11 years of age to Jim, still in diapers at 11 months.***

***One last note: Some of the sons may or may not be known for colorful language. Just so we're all clear as to where we got that from, the last real full-sentence Don issued was directed at his nurses about not wanting any more "f-bomb" medicines. He was a tough and stubborn man.***