

Charity, humor Kind's legacy

By: Ryan Bagwell

Born in Jenkintown, Mr. Kind was best known throughout the community for his continuous involvement in local events and organizations. He vastly supported Abington Memorial Hospital and the Abington Township Public Library, having served on their boards, and was a founding member of the Abington Police Athletic League.

Most recently, Mr. Kind was honored at the Abington Community Taskforce's April Citizens That Care reception. He served on the board of Philadelphia's Big Brother Association for more than 50 years, and was awarded The Charles Edwin Fox Award, the organization's highest distinction.

"The philanthropy he exerted was a low-key effort to get everyone involved," said Howard Fleisher, Mr. Kind's childhood friend who today lives in Elkins Park.

A member of Abington High School's Class of 1933, Mr. Kind graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1937. He worked at his family's jewelry firm in Philadelphia after college and for an insurance broker before serving in the U.S. Navy and later becoming a teacher. He retired from teaching English and social studies at Gillespie Jr. High School in North Philadelphia in 1971.

Fleisher remembered Mr. Kind fondly, having known him since they were children.

"We were best friends from childhood all the way up to now," said Fleisher. "I can only say I'll sorely miss him."

Mr. Kind's daughter, Laura Kind-McKenna, said he was a big flirt, even at 88 years old. But he remained completely committed to his wife of 53 years, Patricia.

He never took life seriously, Kind-McKenna said. Fleisher recalled when he and Mr. Kind were teenagers they slept overnight on the eighth green of the Rydal Country Club, where Mr. Kind's father worked. Their parents volunteered to pay for damages to the course, Fleisher said.

A member of the Tuesday Lunch Club he helped form 25 years ago, Mr. Kind was the lifeblood of the group, Fleisher said. Friends met at the Yorktown Inn each week before it closed, and the club "won't be the same without him," Fleisher said.

Mr. Kind served in the U.S. Navy as a pilot beginning in 1941, and remained a Naval reservist after the German army surrendered in World War II. In the reserves he was stationed at the Willow Grove Naval Air Station most of the time until his retirement from the Navy in 1962. Mr. Kind remained an accomplished glider pilot. A slight mishap in his 70s - pushing the throttle forward instead of pulling it back - sent him briefly to Abington Memorial Hospital, Kind-McKenna said.

On a rainy afternoon Monday, Kind-McKenna and her mother were trading stories about their father and husband. They surmised he would be asking people to guess how much it rained.

Beginning in 1980, Mr. Kind wrote a regular column for the Times Chronicle/Glenside News called "Quill in Hand," turning in his last in January. He wrote more than 1,000 columns and compiled the best in a book sold to benefit the Abington library.

"I wish I had known Phil earlier in life," said Mike Morsch, executive editor of Montgomery Newspapers, parent company of the Times Chronicle/Glenside News. "I only got to work with him for six months before he retired. I enjoyed visiting with Phil when he hand-delivered his column. We'd sit and talk about a lot of things, including baseball, which he loved dearly." Morsch received a letter from Mr. Kind the last week in June.

"He was still pitching story ideas to me," said Morsch. "At the end of his letter, he added: 'I shall be in touch with you. If you are living vicariously as Jim Thome, I am with you 100 percent!'" Mr. Kind never left the Abington area, because "he loved it here," Kind-McKenna said. "He always felt like this was his home and his community."

And by all accounts, his home and his community loved him right back.

Memorial donations in Mr. Kind's name may be sent to the Abington Public Library, 1030 Old York Road, Abington, PA 19001.

The Times Herald

<http://www.montgomerynews.com>

Jul 19, 2004