



Duane R. Abbajay

June 2, 1933 - August 29, 2017

Duane R. Abbajay, of Toledo, Ohio, passed away Tuesday, August 29, 2017, at Perrysburg Commons. He was 84 years old.

Many will know Duane as the long-time proprietor of the Peppermint Club and its later incarnation, the Country Palace.

Duane was born June 2, 1933 in Ada, Michigan to Charles and Geneva (Hood-Hood) Abbajay, one of 13 children.

In 1936, the Abbajay family moved to Toledo and settled into a large home on Superior Street. As a young man, Duane worked nights and weekends in his father's bar 422 Main.

Duane attended Woodward High School, where he was a star football player, tipping the scales his senior year at 260 pounds. His college football career at the University of Wisconsin was cut short after a back injury, an injury that would plague him for decades. He returned to Toledo where he worked for the George Freeman Construction Company in sales and management.

In 1957, he married Marie Kovacik. Their son, Duane C. Abbajay, was born in 1959. In 1958 he founded Abbajay Construction. In 1960, his wife Marie was killed in a car accident.

In 1961, an injury on a construction site led him to the nearest emergency room, where he met and fell in love with a young nurse named Mary Baldwin. They eloped six weeks later, honeymooning in the Black Hills of South Dakota, one of Duane's favorite places. In rapid succession, they had three children together, Bobby, Mary, and Stephanie.

In 1962 Duane took over a failing bar called the Peppermint Club in downtown Toledo at Jefferson and Ontario. Within a year, he had turned it into a hugely popular and successful night club, booking live acts including the Everly Brothers, Fats Domino, Jerry Lee Lewis, the Four Seasons, the Platters, and Chubby Checkers.

In the mid 1970s, when the country music craze began sweeping the nation, he closed the Peppermint Club and reopened it as the Country Palace. His instincts were right on the mark, and the County Palace became one of the most successful Country & Western venues in the Midwest, featuring live music from singers like Charlie Rich, Charlie Pride, Crystal Gayle, Dottie West, Conway Twitty, Waylon Jennings, and others.

In 1977, a songwriter named Hal Bynum wrote a song about a sad scene he witnessed at the Country Palace one night. The song was "Lucille." Kenny Rogers recorded it, and it became a monster hit. It made Kenny Rogers a star and the Country Palace famous. People came from all over the country to see the spot where, "In a bar in Toledo, across from the depot, on a bar stool she took off her ring."

In 1983, his son Bobby died of sleep apnea while a junior at Kenyon College. In 1986, his wife Mary died of breast cancer. In 1988, he sold the night club and retired. An avid golfer, he often golfed 36 holes a day. When he wasn't golfing, he was watching baseball, clipping coupons, bargain shopping, eating

at the Beirut, and visiting his children and siblings around the country.

In 1994, he met Karol Poth of Pemberville, OH. Together they golfed and traveled, and they loved visiting their children and grandchildren around the country. They were a loving couple for 23 years until he passed away this week.

Duane is survived by his children: son, David and daughter-in-law, Maryann Abbajay of Sisters, OR; son, Duane C. (Dino) Abbajay and daughter-in-law, Paula Pennypacker of Scottsdale, Arizona; daughter, Mary Elizabeth Abbajay and son-in-law, Christopher Marlow of Washington, D.C.; and daughter, Stephanie Abbajay and son-in-law, David Stine of St. Louis, MO; his grandchildren, David Lane Abbajay, Dacia Abbajay Lee, Madison Abbajay, Oskar Abbajay Stine, Frazier Abbajay, Walter Abbajay, and Willa Abbajay Stine; his long-time companion, Karol Poth of Pemberville, OH; his sisters, Jeanie (Abbajay) Rejsa of Phoenix, AZ; and Shirley (Abbajay) Shoched, of Toledo, Ohio; and many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Charles and Geneva (Hood-Hood) Abbajay; his wife, Marie Kovacik Abbajay; his wife, Mary (Baldwin) Abbajay; his son, Robert R. Abbajay; his brothers, Richard, James, and Donald Abbajay; and his sisters, Florence (Abbajay) Ruffin, Margery Abbajay, Josephine (Abbajay) Ratajski, Elizabeth (Abbajay) Jordi, Dolores (Abbajay) O'Leary.

Family and friends may visit on Tuesday, September 5, 2017, from 2 - 6 p.m, at the Ansberg-West Funeral Home, 3000 Sylvania Avenue, (between Secor and Douglas Roads), where funeral services will follow at 6 p.m. In lieu of flowers or gifts, Duane has requested memorial contributions be made to the Robert R. Abbajay Memorial Scholarship at Kenyon College. They may be

sent to College Relations Office, Kenyon College, 105 Chase Avenue,
Gambier, OH, 43022.

Online condolences may be sent to the family at www.ansberg-west.com

Tribute Wall

RB

“ So sad to hear about Duane. Tony and I loved him here at Northwood. He will be forever in our hearts. He will always be the longest resident here. Thinking of all you!!

Renee Bezeau - September 05, 2017 at 02:09 PM

ED

“ My condolences to duanes family, he was a good friend and always a gentleman.

ED DARMOFAL - September 04, 2017 at 04:51 PM

DM

“ We are so sad with Duane passing. We will always remember the golf trips that we went on with Karol and him, all the Mud Hens games that we went to with them and most of all we will remember and miss all of his stories. He was a great friend and we will miss him.

Dian & Ted Momany - September 03, 2017 at 03:24 PM

DO

“ After second shift work from Jeep I spent many safe nights as a young hippie down at the Country Palace where the first beer was always on the house and Uncle Duane was always so smooth...

Dennis O'Leary - September 02, 2017 at 03:21 PM

CB

“ Aunt Karol & the Abbajay family, I'm saddened to hear of Duane's passing. He was always a welcome sight when Karol & Duane would stop down to visit grandma Benschneider & the family. I enjoyed hearing his numerous stories & playing cards. He always had a way of bringing a smile to grandma's face during their visits in Payne. He will be missed. thoughts are with you in this time of sadness.

Chad Benschneider

Chad Benschneider - September 01, 2017 at 03:22 PM