



## Donald N. Canham

December 12, 1947 - March 20, 2019

Donald Norris Canham, fondly known as DC, finished his last lap on March 20, 2019 at the age of 71. He was born and raised in Ann Arbor, Michigan, a town that he loved. He graduated from St. Francis Elementary School, St. Thomas High School and The University of Michigan. He was a man of many interests that include pride in U of M sports, collecting wooden boats, hosting Portage Lake July 4th parties, loving animals, sharing his political and historical perspectives, and enjoying good food and drink. However, his passion was coaching track and cross country for 49 years at St. Thomas/Father Gabriel Richard High School. With many team and individual successes, he is regarded as a legendary coach while creating his DC style special family. He served as president and later CEO of School-Tech incorporated. In college he was a member of Zeta Psi Fraternity and stayed actively involved nationally.

Preceded in death by his father, Donald B. Canham and his mother, Marilyn Norris Canham. He will be profoundly missed by his wife, Kathy Donovan Canham; sister, Clare Canham-Eaton; brother-in-law, Don Eaton; nephew, Donald Canham Eaton; niece, Amelia Canham Eaton, her husband Peter Krauss and their children, Connor and Rowan Krauss, Cousins Steve (Julie) Canham, Dr. Jeff (Jane) Canham, Monica (Pete) Ferguson, Barb Dubuc and their families; as well as his extensive track family.

A Memorial Gathering will be held Mar 29. 5:00 pm - 8:00 PM, Nie Funeral Home Liberty Road Chapel, 3767 W. Liberty Road, Ann Arbor, MI, 48103. A Memorial Mass will be held Mar 30. 12:00 pm with visitation starting at 11am, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 2250 E. Stadium Blvd, Ann Arbor, MI, 48104.

Donations may be made in his memory to Don Canham, Jr. Track and Cross Country Fund for Future Development. <https://fgrhs.org/dc/> and the Humane Society of Huron Valley <http://hshv.org/give/donate/>

# Events

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**MAR** **Memorial Gathering** 05:00PM - 08:00PM

**29**

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Liberty Road Chapel

3767 W. Liberty Road, Ann Arbor, MI, US, 48103

**MAR** **Memorial Gathering** 11:00AM - 12:00PM

**30**

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St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church

2250 E. Stadium Blvd, Ann Arbor, MI, US, 48104

**MAR** **Memorial Mass** 12:00PM

**30**

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St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church

2250 E. Stadium Blvd, Ann Arbor, MI, US, 48104

# Comments

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“ My first memory of DC was going out with my brother Dave on our first run prior to cross country season 1978. We finished whatever run DC wanted us to try, and DC picked us up in his van and said in his low key way "You two could be studs." He was right about Dave, who went on to be All State in cross country and track, and could probably write this a lot better than I can. Hopefully they are together sharing a beer with my Dad, both of whose funerals DC was present for. Much later, I sought DC's advice when I started racing again in my 50s. I'd send him my splits from my latest 5k and he'd come back with useful tips like "speed up the second mile." It was in part due to his advice and continued mentoring that I was able, decades after high school, to qualify for and run the Boston Marathon a few years back. I will be forever grateful to DC for the gifts he bestowed upon our family, and will miss him.

Bob Himlin, class of 1979

Bob Himlin - April 12 at 12:13 AM

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“ Fond memories of conversations (and the occasional beverage) with DC at many Zete conventions and a couple of games at The Big House (and post game frivolities). We'll be raising a glass or 2 in Baltimore this August! Condolences to Kathy....Jeff Ball

Jeff Ball - March 29 at 12:36 PM

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“ Love always, Tom and Paula O'Brien and Family purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Donald N. Canham.



Love always, Tom and Paula O'Brien and Family - March 29 at 09:11 AM

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“ Summer's Light Bouquet was purchased for the family of Donald N. Canham.



March 27 at 05:08 PM

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“ One of kind and full of love for all those he coached to make them the best they could be. So many great remembrances of Coach DC. I will miss him and all the support he provided for me and then the kids he inspired me to coach. May his wonderful spirit shine on for all of us.  
"Mr. Pete"

**Pete Lemmer** - March 27 at 10:11 AM

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“ I had the good fortune of having DC as my track coach. He taught us many things ... responsibility as practice was not mandatory but you would be the one competing with everyone watching. Somehow practice seemed important. Your best effort was good enough for DC. Track and field is called athletics in Europe. We don't run track we RACE. When you had a good day he let you know but somehow was able to understand if you didn't. DC had the unique ability to get the best out of every athlete no matter the talent. If you were having trouble with your event he found someone to come to practice to help you. To sum it up he cared.

It was my good fortune to have him as a coach. DC a great coach and an even better person!

**Paul Sherzer** - March 26 at 03:34 PM

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“ Like Ric Johnson, Don and I went to school together from 1st grade through high school where we both ran track. Not sure about the reference to a last lap as Don was a sprinter and I think the 220 was his distance limit. In his other activities, Don definitely marched to his own drum. He was a talented cartoonist and could have made a living doing it. He loved to drag race (on a legitimate track) with his Ford Falcon. He was a fountain of knowledge about the early history of the state of Michigan. Always generous he often offered to get me to a Michigan home football game if I got back to Ann Arbor during the season (apparently he had some kind of connection - place winking emoji here). We last saw Don last summer, after a 600 mile drive from the UP, Rose, my sister, and I stopped into Metzger's for a drink. While sitting at the bar I recognized Don on the end stool just as he saw us. We had a nice chat, and of course when Rose and I went to leave our bar tab had been picked up. Happy trails, Don.

**Thomas Downer** - March 26 at 10:42 AM

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“ Tom & Rose Downer purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Donald N. Canham.



Tom & Rose Downer - March 26 at 10:02 AM

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“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Donald N. Canham.



March 26 at 09:55 AM

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“ Mark Richard- Class of 76'  
DC was first my History teacher, then my track coach, mentor, and a great friend. One memory of many, was many moons ago, when DC presented to my parents (Louie and Patricia) a wood hurdle engraved with 6 names of there sons, with dates showing which years we ran the hurdles for him. Don was so appreciative to my parents for giving him a Richard hurdler for a straight 20 years running. Just an example of DC showing his love and compassion to everyone he encountered. In most recent years DC and I would text each other jokes, and often get together for a late lunch at Metzger's Restaurant, his favorite hang out.  
Love ya Don, going to miss ya, see ya on the other side

Mark Richard - March 25 at 08:34 PM

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“ Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Donald N. Canham.



March 25 at 06:01 PM

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“ DC was my teacher in middle school, my coach in high school, friend in life, and eventually coach to my son. Always hilarious and always charming. A true legend who spanned generations of students and athletes and made a positive impact on each and every one. You just can't do better in life. Rest in Peace DC.

Joe Simon - March 25 at 02:55 PM

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“ I am so sorry to hear of this tragic news. My parents and family knew Don and his sister Clare as we went to St. Thomas. I haven't kept in touch with Don and he was older than I was but my older siblings (Tobias) at St. Thomas all remember him well. Prayers for remaining family members and close friends.

Sally Tobias Popa - March 24 at 08:32 PM

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“ As you once told me that life goes on within you, without you, you are once again proven correct. It will just be a bit bleaker without you. Rest in peace Speed. You will be missed. TKΦ and Go Blue!

Donald Robinson - March 24 at 07:14 PM

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“ Al oneill - 68-72 shotputter.  
I was the third of 4 oneill boys who ran track for dc. He had a huge impact on all of us. He was a legend. He was a great motivator but in the most quiet way.  
I was in a quagmire my junior year . Same distance, every week. No improvement. Dc was not a field events guy. I must have presented him with a challenge. He sent me to u much coach Harvey who was at the time the umich record holder for the shop put. He also did something revolutionary at the time. He brought out his home movie camera and filmed me for several hours And gave me tapes to watch . By the end of the season I had added 3 ft to my throw and placed third at the catholic league championship . By the end of my senior year, I had the farthest throw in the state for our class and won the catholic league championship . Dc took the time to help a 16 yr old kid who was by no means a physical specimen and who was not going to become world class shot putter. That's the kind of man he was. Quiet, reserved , respectful, generous. In my life, I have judged every kids coach by the high Pole vault bar that dc put up. No one has ever bested him.  
In this day of multimillion dollar salaries and pouty coaches and athletes, I wish they could all have seen how this man approached athletics and the positive power and potential of the coach / athlete relationship . Those of us who lived it know.  
Dc, you will be missed.

al oneill 68-72 - March 24 at 12:28 PM



“ I remember going out for track as a freshman and getting a very short haircut in preparation for the season. DC liked my haircut and called me "sergeant rock" when I ran track for him in 84'. DC had a way of inspiring you to succeed. I can't really explain his style but it was effective! You wanted to succeed and you wanted to in part because DC wanted you to! And only those who ran for DC or threw shot and discuss for him know what I am talking about. He had a presence and a way about him that was his and only his. I have never seen another coach with the ability to size up an athlete and then inspire that athlete to reach their potential like DC could. Every runner, and athlete coached by DC will tell you the same thing- they were better athletes and better men for having been coached by DC. I will miss you my friend! You certainly made a difference in my life and I grateful for it.

Auf Wiedersehen,

Chris Smail 87'

**Chris Smail- friend of Don Canham** - March 23 at 09:05 AM

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“ Both Tim and I will hold our fond memories of DC forever in our hearts. All of the great memories of getting together on Portage Lake in Pinckney, MI where we all share residences. Rest in peace DC. No more pain. You will be dearly missed.

**Jamie Groth** - March 22 at 02:51 PM

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“ Pretty Please was purchased for the family of Donald N. Canham.



March 22 at 12:08 PM

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“ Eric & Barb Johnson purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Donald N. Canham.



Eric & Barb Johnson - March 22 at 11:21 AM

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“ It was a very sad and unexpected thing to hear of Don’s passing. He was such a unique fellow that I didn’t think of him a mortal. We were schoolmates from first grade through college, sharing many adventures, many of those should be left private. I was his first Canham Lending Library subscriber at \$.10/book. We worked together at Wolverine Sports boxing shot-puts and stopwatches in the same box to see how that turned out. We double dated in his too-cool ’64 Falcon convertible. We drank at the Zete "Joe's in the Orient" bar. Although not as close as adults, I followed and admired his devotion to coaching. Farwell good friend. You marched to your own drummer. I will remember you.

Eric Johnson  
St Francis, St Thomas '66, U of M '70

Eric Johnson - March 22 at 11:15 AM

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“ Tom and Trudy,  
What a wonderful tribute ! I share your thoughts. DC had a way of treating most everyone he would meet as a good friend. A thoughtful and generous man. I hope Kathy, Clare, Don and DC's entire family take some comfort in the shared memories of his friends.  
Mike Hill

Mike Hill - March 22 at 10:04 AM

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“ Don was very special to me. He was my cross country coach. My track coach. He help me get a job at School Tech. He assist me in getting in the University of Michigan. He was a childhood friend with one of my best friends, Jim Coleman. I will miss Don. I’m very sorry I will not be back from Florida in time for his memorial.  
God Bless You Don.  
Mike Chase StThomas Class of 74’

Mike Chase - March 21 at 10:20 PM



“ I am devastated by the news of Don's passing. He was one of my dearest friends in high school and undergrad. My thoughts of him through the passing decades was always with warmth.

My husband and I send our deepest regards to Don's family. Margaret Kruse Connors  
STHS 1967

Margaret Kruse Connors - March 22 at 03:53 PM



“ A truly great Zete (Zeta Psi). Along with Ralph Rumsey, he defined Zeta Psi brotherhood.

Joe Bird U-M Xi 78

Joe Bird - March 21 at 07:27 PM

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“ Kathy and Clare  
When one's life was so large and legendary as DC's was it leaves a huge gaping hole in the hearts of all those who knew him and loved him. Most of us can count or call a handful of people as true or close friends - DC had numbers like the stars in the sky. The memories we have we will hold for the rest of our lives and we are better people for having known him. A Coach a teacher and a life long friend - we can only hope to live out our lives as he would want us to. Enjoying life and friendships to the fullest. I don't think he would mind if we all raise a glass of cheer and give one final toast to DC!! We will miss him every day and remember him every day - God speed and God bless our dear fiend Don Canham.  
Tom and Trudy Driscoll

Tom and Trudy Driscoll - March 21 at 06:40 PM



“ A collector of coasters, wooden boats, stories and jokes, a purveyor of history of any kind, an epicure of fine wine and food, a friend to animals, athletes and wait staff and a devotee to his "doll", Kathy.. We will miss you DC.

Amy - March 26 at 08:05 PM