



Berwyn C. Kirby

January 6th 1936 - January 24th 2020



Greetings!

The day I met Berwyn Kirby defined him in my mind for the rest of the time that I knew him. We were in our small motor boat and came across a group of people paddling in inner tubes. The tide had turned so they had the wind and current against them, and they were struggling to go upstream. We offered to strap them together and take them to their portage. They were grateful except for one man in a white tee who declined our assistance; he simply grunted. He had a stiff jaw, a massive set of biceps, and a flat top haircut. My husband and I exchanged raised eyebrows that said, "Who is this guy?". Once we got the six or so inner tubes strapped to our boat we were slow to make headway. Amazingly, the man who refused our offer paddled his way upstream against the tide and kept up with us. He had an unusual glint in his eye, a look that would be repeated in all my encounters with him: a look of fierce independence, a look of defiance, the look of "I dare you to cross me," and oddly enough that look also contained a glimmer of humor.

Berwyn was legendary. He'd been a high school hero in football, instrumental in a team that had 31 straight wins. And by contrast, he and his brother were accomplished tap dancers.

With complete confidence I know that no one would've challenged his tap dancing as anything but manly. Former classmate Joanne Murphine told me that he once performed in an assembly and that the crowd went crazy.

Berwyn was serious about any endeavor he took on, just as he furiously paddled that inner tube. He built his beautiful natural cedar home on the river with his wife Kay, who was the apple of his eye. He was ferociously protective of her and their property. He was known as the troll of the Menantico for his need to know what you were up to if you invaded what he saw as his territory. He was a living John Wayne, a man of his word who told it as he saw it, and a straightforward guy. He knew a tiger by its stripes. He had no tolerance for a phony. Berwyn was the cofounder of Citizens United and he was serious about protecting it. He didn't just love the river; he was passionate about it.

He played football in Miami and at Penn State, and the stories of his physical prowess are endless. The fellow weightlifters at the gym wanted him to go for the National Weight Lift title in his age group, knowing that he had exceeded the statistics of the current champion. At the time I believe he was in his 60s. But titles were of no interest to Berwyn.

He was very proud of his university education and he could be a formidable orator. He was a Nittany Lion, no doubt about it. During our advocacy for Wild and Scenic River designation Berwyn was very active. When he spoke the audience was riveted to every syllable. He would say that words were important, but if they failed you better have a bazooka in your back pocket. He was full of such Berwyn-isms. One of my favorites was years ago; after Millville laid out beautiful paving on the sidewalks he suggested that it was like putting patent leather shoes on a scarecrow. Another of his sayings was "A room full of politicians is like a bunch of mutts sniffing butts."

Berwyn's wardrobe was either grit or flair. Outdoors it was always Carhart overalls and a white t-shirt; only on truly frigid days did he top it off with a jacket. But for the classroom or for other events he wore a sports jacket because there were rules, and you dressed for the occasion.

It was said that he was loved by his students. Years down the road they would come back to him and thank him for teaching them discipline: for not lowering the bar but setting a standard. In my own life he had a great influence on what I would tolerate and where I would finally draw a line. He was a mentor of honesty and fortitude and I am forever grateful for having known him.

Our sincere condolences to the family, who surely have many rich memories of their own.

Sincerely,



Jane Morton Galetto
CU Maurice River Board President

Berwyn C. Kirby

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Millville - Berwyn C. Kirby (84), longtime resident of Millville, NJ passed away Friday, January

24, 2020. He was born on January 6, 1936, the son of the late George and Thelma (Riley) Kirby.

As a proud Thunderbolt, he graduated from Millville High School, Class of 1955. Berwyn was a varsity letterman in four sports in high school, voted best athlete and continued playing football at the University of Miami and [Penn State University](#). He graduated with a Bachelors of Science from Penn State.

Teaching Special Education for over 35 years, Berwyn was awarded the honor of Teacher of the Year in 2001. He began his teaching career in Los Angeles, CA before returning to Millville in 1969 where he taught school in Mannington Twp. and Alloway Twp.

In 1971, Berwyn established Kirby's Club 31 (named after the Thunderbolts' 31 game winning streak) and sold the business about 15 years ago. He was also the oldest living member of Venatores Gunning Club.

Being an outdoor enthusiast and dedicated environmental advocate, he co-founded Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, Inc. Living on the Menantico Creek, he was instrumental in preserving the character of this pristine paradise. As a leader, Berwyn was actively involved in obtaining the designation of the Maurice River and Its Tributaries to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Inventory List.

Berwyn was a loving and caring husband to his wife Kay for over 60 years. During Kay's Alzheimer's decline that began ten years ago, he never left her side. Anyone who knew him could see that he was fiercely protective of the people and places he loved.

Berwyn is survived by his wife Kay E. (Janecki) Kirby, daughter Marjorie Kirby, daughter Mary Ann Westerfield and her husband David; sister in-law Clara (Hatcher) Kirby; and four grandchildren, Virginia Bixby and fiancé Kosta Gregory, Kaitlyn Moore and husband Bradley, Kayley Westerfield and Kirby Westerfield. He was predeceased by his brother Ellis Kirby; his step-father, Fred Kruger; his step brothers, Fred Kruger Jr. and Charles Kruger as well as step- sister Jean Graiffe.

Funeral services will be conducted at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, January 29, 2020 in the Christy Funeral Home, 11 W. Broad Street, Millville, NJ. Family and friends will be received on Wednesday from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the funeral home. Burial will be in Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, Millville.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Alzheimer's Foundation of America, 322 Eighth Ave., 16th Floor, NY, NY 10001.

Memories and expressions of sympathy for Berwyn Kirby may be shared at www.christyfuneralservice.com.

CU ON THE RIVER
www.CUMauriceRiver.org

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