



David A. Tanner

January 21, 1950 - May 7, 2020

David and his twin brother Joe were born in Danville, Illinois, January 21st 1950

to the late Megan and Bill Tanner. He grew up with and is survived by his four brothers, Jim, Joe, Tom, and John in an idyllic, central Illinois rural setting surrounded by mature trees, ponds, fertile farm fields and close family. He graduated from Danville High School in 1968 where upon his academic promise and athletic potential received attention from legendary IU swim coach James “Doc” Counsilman. He was recruited to Doc’s program at Indiana University and the rest as they say “is history.” He physically left Danville for Bloomington though throughout his life he steadfastly stated that while he “lived in Bloomington, he was actually from Danville, Illinois.” Thus, he never really left home and recently returned there to end his fight against lymphoma.

David, or Dave to many, quickly embraced Bloomington and the IU experience even though at the time, he recognized that he’d likely be a bench warmer with Olympians and multiple world record holders as teammates. But he reasoned that it gave him an advantage by being able to observe the very best do what they do. And despite sitting on the bench, over the next fifty years, his teammates universally perceived Dave as the glue that bound thirty some years of the Counsilman Era swimmers together. He became the team archivist, the Counsilman historian, the event planner, and the perpetuator of

all things Counsilman. Perhaps most importantly to him, he became a devoted friend, affectionate caregiver and valued confidante to Doc, Marge and the Counsilman family.

Following his graduation from IU (Phi Beta Kappa), David began almost immediately to build and express his personal legacy and philosophy. He accepted a coaching position in Spain, became fluent in Spanish and very quickly formed friendships that lasted his lifetime. David became an embodiment of the National Park Service's "take only memories & pictures, leave only footprints." He rarely left home without a camera. He had few material wants or needs. And ultimately, he left some very large footprints wherever he went. As he traveled through life, David became a collector of experiences and great friendships. He always had people to see, places to go and things to do... and valued that above the virtual reality offered by today's technology. Walking anywhere in Bloomington with Dave became an exercise in patience as eight out of ten people passed not only knew him but admired him and the ideals by which he lived.

It is important to be mentioned that David earned his Eagle Scout rating from Troop 19 before leaving Danville. The Boy Scout manual states: "Eagle Scout" is not just an award; it is a state of being. Those who earned it as youth continue to earn it every day as adults. That is why an Eagle Scout IS an Eagle Scout—not was." David took this very seriously and it is evident that he lived his entire life as an eagle scout and a gentleman; someone whose conduct conforms to the highest standard of propriety and correct behavior. He didn't drink alcohol. He didn't smoke. But he frequently admitted that he had an "unhealthy crush on Wonder Woman."

There were clearly many facets to David's life, some well known to all and some carefully and purposely hidden to all by him. Despite his own views on the matter, he was, in fact, by every measure, an elite, accomplished athlete.

He held multiple state and national swim records (more than 100 Top Ten USMS Performances). Some of these records he held for decades. He completed some of the most ardent physical competitions ever arranged: the Western States 100, The Ironman at Kona, the Swim around Manhattan, and the Race Across America are just a few. He participated in trail runs, orienteering competitions, canoe races, open water competitions, kayak camping, river running and back country mountaineering. He never gave up. He never gave in. To quote his twin brother Joe, "David always was a very tough bird."

To really know David, you'd have to be aware of his academic accomplishments as well as his athletic ones. Over the years, he wasn't particularly forthcoming because he felt it made him appear "snooty." When someone who didn't know him well came looking for "Dr Tanner" he would always respond in a private conspiratorial voice that "Dr Tanner is particularly busy today, but I'm Dave, how can I help you?" He held degrees from IU in Mathematics, Computer Science, Physics, Exercise Physiology, and Human Performance. In the truest sense of the word, he could honestly be described as a polymath. At IUB, David held various appointments and duties over the years. He was a computer programmer, data analyst, and statistical consultant. He was an outstanding instructor for multiple undergraduate courses in Exercise Science and Kinesiology. Perhaps most impressively, he mentored and was instrumental in assisting more than a dozen doctoral candidates complete their terminal degrees. Scholars from around the world recognized his expertise and his invaluable help in getting them through their difficult research projects. Some tried to hire him away from IU with no success. His loyalty to IU was boundless. A few interest areas in particular stand out: high altitude physiology, ventilatory mechanics, nutritional requirements of athletes, the physics of swimming, ventilatory motor performance are to name a few. He co-authored two books on the science of

swimming and was an author and contributor to many, many peer reviewed research reports. He played an instrumental role in elevating the scholarship within the Kinesiology graduate program at IU from the late 1980s and onward.

David would tell you that the greatest reflection of his life efforts though, would be the North High School Swim Program. David coached at North for more than two decades developing a program displaying characteristics in line with his personal beliefs. With David at the helm at North, winning really wasn't everything. To him it was only ever a minor measure of success. David celebrated each and every athlete's progress regardless of the competitive outcomes of the races. He strove to build a "program legacy" whereby participation was most important element. His focus was centered on the lasting memories, the friendships formed and the unique traditions they embraced. Similar to what he observed and learned from Doc, his relationships with his swimmers had no expiration date. His focus was on the entire individual not specifically the athlete. David played the role of coach, mentor, teacher, role model, confidante, counselor and of course... friend. His time commitment was enormous, his commitment total. His coaching days began well before dawn and frequently he could be seen cycling home well after dark. According to his swimmers, his only fault, perhaps, was making them endure his daily "corny sense of humor." But in reality, they universally loved him for it.

David never married despite being frequently in love. If you were to conclude that he therefore didn't have a family, you'd be wrong. His family was Bloomington and his family eventually spanned the globe. His family consisted of all the swimmers who swam for him at North and all the swimmers who ever swam for IU. It included all the students he taught and all of the young scholars he helped. And of course his family included all of his brothers, their wives, children and grandchildren and his cousins in Wales.

David was a man of modest income and modest needs. Over his life he asked for so little and gave so much to so many. If you had to choose someone to save your life, no matter what ... David would be your guy. If you tied yourself to a rope and traversed a dangerous crevasse field, David would be your choice to be on the other end. He would never let up, never give in. He was a hidden giant among us who was never able to recognize the extent of esteem for him that was held by all who knew him well. Though much too short, his was a life well lived. David left us with great memories, many photographs and his many footprints on all of our lives. He will be greatly missed by his family, close friends and admirers within the Danville and Bloomington communities and around the world.

A Celebration of Life for David will be scheduled at a later date.

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory 4155 South Old State Road 37 is handling the arrangements and online condolences, photos and memories may be shared with family and friends.

Tribute Wall

“ Dave Tanner: "We don't swim very fast but we are very nice"

Normally, there is a tendency to speak well of a person and praise his values and qualities when he dies; This is not the case. The phrase that this writing titles is one that Dave Tanner used to have in his mouth very often, he was very proud of his swimmers Dave Tanner was one of those people who garnered respect and admiration as a person from everyone in the swimming world who had a relationship with him, regardless of his condition (athlete, partner, colleague, parents ...); For that reason, in these moments that he has left us, it is not appropriate to say everything we already know about him, but to make clear, for those who were not lucky enough to share with him some experience, what he meant for swimming, both as a coach and as a person.

In these times when factors such as leadership, coaching, HR management or general management are given great importance, Dave innately possessed all the qualities together, without having specific training in it. As a coach, he implemented a way of working with swimmers, making the rigor and quality of work compatible with the human and educational factor of ALL swimmers; He had a great school of a great teacher (Doc Consilman) and was able to adapt all his experience and wisdom to the idiosyncrasy of Spanish swimming, especially in "Club swimming".

His vision of swimming made any member of the team capable of performing at their highest level, but above all, he made everyone who trained, enjoyed and loved swimming, understanding the values of the sport and assuming and fulfilling their demands. At a time when swimming in Madrid was going through moments of "stagnation" (1974-78), he was able to refloat the level; working under the conditions that were available in those years in terms of time and facilities, he achieved results that were not expected; contributed champions of Spain, as well as swimmers to the national team of the National Federation, and even some Olympians. But above all, it provided a vision of swimming training

where the sports level was perfectly integrated with the seriousness and demands of high performance, with the human level of athletes. This, I dare say, is an ART.

Since his departure in 1979, we have been very fortunate to receive him on several occasions in Spain for various reasons, one of them being his participation as a lecturer at the World Coaches Congress held in Barcelona / 2003 on the occasion of the FINA World Championship. The last time we were able to share with the moments of joy and memories was in March 2014 when it was 40 years since he came to Spain; We were able to gather 95% of all the athletes he trained at the Canoe Nación Club to offer him recognition for his contribution and dedication in those “wonderful years”. It has not been left on deaf ears; all his teachings and legacy are still reflected after more than 40 years.

Swimming is in mourning, especially swimming in Madrid and in particular Canoe swimming, but his memory will last between the lane lines and above all, in the minds of all of us who share something with him.

From here my condolences to all his family, friends and colleagues; I have the feeling that my older brother is gone.

Have a nice trip my dear!, I'm sure that wherever you are, you will already be doing the workout with the 20x50 EEOF and throwing candies into the water. We will never forget you Dave.

R.I.P

Moises Gosalvez

Director os Spanish School of Swimming Coaches

Moises Gosalvez - July 28, 2020 at 07:44 AM

DH

“ I got to know Dave on the beach in Dover (England) while I was training for a third attempt to swim the English Channel. Dave was coaching a US swimmer, but taking an interest in everyone. When his swimmer broke his wrist Dave asked if he could come on my boat to 'help out', as he had a day spare. He knew I was not an elite athlete, and had only a slim chance of success, but he treated me the same as the champions we were surrounded by. His help was immense, and significant in getting me across. His quiet encouragement, and swimming alongside me from time to time helped get me my goal and left us good friends ever since, though we only physically met once again when Dave was back coaching another Channel aspirant.

I didn't know Dave nearly as well as some folk, but it speaks volumes for him that such a short encounter could leave such a lasting friendship. It was a privilege and a pleasure to know him. My sympathy to all who knew and loved him.

Duncan Heenan - July 18, 2020 at 11:16 AM

DC

“ David was my swim coach for one year at Tri-State Racquet Club in Evansville. Before he took the head coaching job at Tri-State, I had read Doc Counsilman’s “The Science of Swimming”. David was an authentic practitioner of all the techniques Doc wrote about in his book.

David bought an underwater camera that year and filmed our strokes underwater, something I had never had done before. Picture David, without air tank or scuba gear, submerging himself on the bottom of the pool, holding his breath for roughly two minutes at a time, while filming a dozen swimmers in succession.

He was a wonderful person and coach who will be warmly remembered and much missed. Rest in peace, David.

David Carnes
Charlottesville, VA

David Carnes - June 01, 2020 at 09:31 AM

KK

“ I would like to extend my condolences to all of Dave's family. I am so sorry for your loss. Dave was such a wonderful human being. I always knew how much Dave valued his family by the many times he would talk about all of you.

I first met Dave when he took the Orienteering class I was teaching at IU. We continued our friendship through track club, biking, swimming, triathlons etc. Dave was my sports hero. He was always there to lend advice and encouragement. He was the person I asked for advice when I decided to ride the Paris-Brest-Paris bicycle race, because of course he had already done it. For about 6 months we were alternates together on a team trying to compete in a multi-sport race in Canada, but we both decided to focus on finishing our PhDs. We could always commiserate about the ups and downs of a PhD program.

Dave is one of the most genuine, kind, decent, friendly guys I've ever known. He was a person of outstanding character. He always gave of his time and his knowledge with enthusiasm and patience. A top quality human being. You will be missed - Karan Keith

Karan Keith - May 27, 2020 at 03:42 PM

SB

“ My time knowing Dave has been far too short, but I will be forever grateful to him for the influence he had and continues to have on my daughter, who is among the last of his North swimmers. Under Dave's immeasurable kindness and his keen eye, she found new speed, exceeded her own expectations and gave him credit for a freestyle stroke that went from memorable because of its oddities to extraordinary for looking so effortless. More importantly, he was a perfect match for her swimming desires, a teacher of life lessons through hard work and friendship, a model of humility, a mentor and a safe adult in whom she could confide. She wants to use her senior year as captain to impart Dave's values to the rest of her team and to ensure that the future of the program will continue with his spirit. As a family we will miss him greatly and will never watch "When Harry Met Sally" again without feeling melancholy that he's not there to share a Rom-Com with us. Godspeed Dave, best wishes to the Tanner family and all Dave's friends,

Steven Backs - May 13, 2020 at 04:07 PM



“ Dave, Joe and I were in school together from kindergarten through 10th grade. He was one of the nicest fellows I ever knew. Never heard him say a bad thing about anybody. He was well loved.

Bob Jones - May 13, 2020 at 03:02 PM

SH

“ I worked with Dave at I.U. He was a wonderful person. He will be missed.

Sandra Hudson - May 12, 2020 at 02:34 PM

MM

“ *My condolences to Dave's family and the many, many individuals he so positively impacted as a teacher, researcher, coach, swimmer and all-around good guy.*

Matt Morris - May 12, 2020 at 08:28 AM

JO

“ *Thanks, Dave. We didn't know you long, but you were a very special man and you are missed.-The Okulskis*

John Okulski - May 11, 2020 at 11:32 AM

“ There is too much to say and not the right words to express the effect some individuals have on others. “We’re going over to the Tanner’s” always seemed to mean more when you also heard “They say David might come over”. Talk about economy of comment and mountainous presence, all David had to do was just “showed up” and you would feel better.

Megan would have a slightly wider smile and seem to have a little more spring in her step when David was on his way over for a visit. Doc as always would be holding the tiller steady eventually saying something side splitting hilarious completely off the cuff.

There is also the special effect of being a twin. You could hang with Joe or you could hang with David and each were unique. But there was also a completely different “vibe” when the two of them were together. It’s hard to explain. Together they were a force greater than the sum of their individual beings.

There would be car parts everywhere with a stripped-down engine block in the garage and another engine block hanging from the swing set on Monday and by Friday there was a totally restored Triumph and MG sitting in the driveway and both were washed and waxed.

You didn’t see a competition between the two brothers it was from each tossing the lead back and forth. And I’m sure the other brothers like the rest of us also experienced that trait in one form or another from David. He was always trying to figure how to stuff 12 pounds into a 10-pound sack.

For some reason David got an extra helping of “quiet man” and “gentle soul” while the rest of us (and we know who we are) got our fair portions from the steaming pile of “ornery”.

I think about my daughters asking “Do you think David will be there?” as we were on our way to the Christmas bon fire over by

Tanner's Pond.

All last night I was trying to recall memories of David expecting one of those thoughts to wash over me with grief. But again, it was very strange. Every memory I would have of David resulted in a quiet and calm smile.

But I guess that's the kind of legacy we would all like to leave. Jim, Joe, John and Tom (and families) as you know there are many who share in your loss. Chic – roderickgary@gmail.com

Gary N. Roderick - May 11, 2020 at 10:12 AM

JH

“ *It's difficult to put into words what Dave meant to the Bloomington swim community, to the city of Bloomington, and to anyone who met him and became his friend. He was an amazing coach, beautiful human being, and remarkable role model who irrevocably influenced countless others. His influence will never stop. Rest in peace Dave.*

Jeff & Lesa Huber

Jeff Huber - May 10, 2020 at 10:14 AM

SS

“ *To every member of Dave's family and they number in the thousands, my thoughts are with you all. As a North "Swim Parent" and US Swimming official for many years Dave was an inspiration to me. I loved being poolside and being able to see Dave work his magic with so many young people and old folks like myself. So many wonderful memories.*

"Aunt" Sarah Sandberg

Sarah Gene Sandberg - May 10, 2020 at 08:52 AM

JM

“ I can remember Dave peeling me off of the warm deck at the Danville Country Club and throwing me into that ice cold water to start the morning workout. That memory is with me today. I am grateful to have known him and his spirit shall remain a role model for the entirety of many lives. Regards, Jeffrey Mason

JEFFREY MASON - May 09, 2020 at 02:58 PM

HM

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Heike Meya - May 08, 2020 at 08:08 AM

EB

“ I wish to extend my condolences to Jim, Joe, John, and Tom on the loss of your beloved brother David. I have very fond memories of the time I spent with David and the rest of your family on weekends and during the summer while I was attending the Univ of Illinois. You were all very generous in opening your home and your hearts to this very over-whelmed person away from her own home for the first time. David will forever be a part of me through the very fond memories I have of the time I spent in his company. I hope you will all find comfort in your own memories of a very special brother. Fondest regards, Ellen Black

Ellen Black - May 08, 2020 at 12:18 AM