



H. Griffin 'Griff' Watkins

March 17, 1929 - May 19, 2010

H. Griffin "Griff" Watkins, beloved husband, father, grandfather and friend, died May 19, 2010, at Hospice of Northwest Ohio. He was born March 17, 1929, in Toledo, to the late Harold Griffin Watkins and Maria Croke Watkins.

A wordsmith, he was involved in communications beginning as a staffer on the University of Toledo Campus Collegian. He later became the president of Flournoy and Gibbs Inc., a pioneering Toledo public relations agency.

Griff possessed a quick wit and the gift of blarney inherited from his Irish ancestors. On a visit to Ireland, he kissed the Blarney Stone, just to be sure. Named for his father, he was never known as Harold. If anyone asked what the "H" stood for, he had a ready answer: "Handsome."

He attended St. Ann's School and was graduated from Central Catholic High School. He began his working life as a teenager at the Toledo Zoo, doing whatever had to be done: selling popcorn, cutting grass, helping with animal care. Asked by his son if he fed the elephants, he explained that he was actually involved in the other end of the nutrition process.

After graduation from the University of Toledo in 1951, Griff worked briefly as a police reporter for the former Toledo Times until he was drafted into the Army during the Korean Conflict. He was a communications officer for the Alaska Communications System at King Salmon. "I helped save the world from communism on the Alaskan frontier," he said.

He joined the editorial staff of the Fort Wayne, Ind., daily, The Journal-Gazette, in 1953. He remembered interviewing such notables as singer Eddie

Fisher, actress Marilyn Maxwell and football star Johnny Unitas. One experience was unique. Sen. Estes Kefauver, vice presidential candidate in 1956, was the only one to be interviewed in his underwear. They were boxers. The Journal-Gazette reporters and editors were close-knit and threw many staff parties. Unfailingly, Griff sang "We're Strong for Toledo" for the mostly Hoosier party-goers. The performance was eventually banned.

Reporter Pat Kelsey worked at a desk just across the aisle in the newsroom. She and Griff discovered many common interests beyond their shared enthusiasm for the news business, and "Tristan and Isolde," as one office wag called them, were married in Fort Wayne in 1956. They moved to Toledo in 1957, where he joined Flournoy and Gibbs. He initially handled the Toledo Museum of Art account. Subsequently, he supervised such accounts as Owens-Corning, The Toledo Hospital, MasterCard of Ohio and the former First National Bank.

Accredited by the Public Relations Society of America, he served as president of the Northwest Ohio Chapter. He was a founding member of the Press Club of Toledo; president of the Advisory Board of the Catholic Club of Toledo for eight years; and a member of Toledo Rotary Club. He also was a guest lecturer in public relations at Bowling Green State University.

Volunteer efforts included tutoring for Read for Literacy and reading Time magazine for blind clients of the Sight Center. He also was an active supporter of his children's schools, St. John's Jesuit and the former McAuley High School. His enthusiasm for his children's pursuits stopped only at Black Friday, his name for the monthly pack meeting of the Cub Scouts.

Griff could not begin a day without the morning newspaper. He savored good writing and read extensively, especially history and biography.

Sports were a particular passion. He was a fan of the Toledo Mud Hens, the Detroit Tigers, the Detroit Lions, the University of Toledo Rockets and the Irish of Notre Dame. A golfer since college days, he was always hopeful that the next season would be better and that he would maybe shoot his age. That never happened, but he had a hole-in-one many years ago. Three days

before his death, he was gearing up for 2010. He also was eager to get started on his backyard plantings: 1,000 impatiens plants.

He is survived by his wife, Patricia Kelsey Watkins; sons Daniel K. Watkins (Sarah) and John G. Watkins (Mona) of Toledo; daughter Nancy G. Watkins (Brian Lavelle) of Chicago; and grandson Griffin P. Wood (known to his grandfather as Griffin the Great) of Chicago. He also is survived by many loving nieces and nephews.

His two sisters, Ann Maria Wassermann and Sue O'Neal, are deceased.

A Memorial Mass will be celebrated at 11 a.m. Monday, May 24, at the Historic Church of St. Patrick, 130 Avondale Ave., with visitation at the church for an hour prior to the Mass. Visitation for family and friends will be held from 4 to 8 p.m. Sunday, May 23, at the Coyle Funeral Home, 1770 S. Reynolds Road, Toledo. There will be a Scripture service at 7 p.m.

Preferred memorials are the Historic Church of St. Patrick and Hospice of Northwest Ohio, 30000 E. River Road, Perrysburg, OH 43551.

Tribute Wall



“ *Cead Mile Failte
I lit a candle for thee today...*

Are ye in heaven before the devil knew you were gone?

Angel wings surround you, Pat.

Cherish sweet memories.....##imported-begin##Mariol##imported-end##

May 19, 2010 at 12:00 AM



“ *So sorry to hear about Griff. What a beautiful obit...it brought a tear to my eye but also made me smile. You have so many memories to treasure. It's clear where Griff's daughter gets her sharp wit (dad and mom).*

Best,

Julie##imported-begin##Julie Sheer

sheer.julie@gmail.com##imported-end##

May 19, 2010 at 12:00 AM



“ *Dear Pat, Dan & Sarah, Nancy, Brian, Griffin, & John & Mona.
A lovely tribute to our great friend and brother-in-law. We will miss Griff and his wonderful sense of humor always. Our love and sympathy to you all. Barbara and Jim##imported-begin##Barbara & Jim Graham j.bgraham@yahoo.com##imported-end##*

May 19, 2010 at 12:00 AM



“ sounds like a life well lived, including his hole in one (still trying to get my 1st); my sincere condolences to the family Bill Kroll SJ '75##imported-begin##Bill Kroll wckroll@buckeye-access.com##imported-end##

May 19, 2010 at 12:00 AM



“ Watkins Family,
You are all in my thoughts and prayers this week. The obituary was beautiful and really captured Griff's spirit. Peace be with you.
Julie Coyle##imported-begin##Julie Coyle
jul@infionline.net##imported-end##

May 19, 2010 at 12:00 AM



“ We will miss our wonderful Uncle Griff terribly. What a full and interesting life he led. We love you Aunt Pat; Dan and Sarah; John and Mona; Nancy and Brian and Griffin. We hold you close to our hearts.##imported-begin##Kristi and Tom
shanesy3@msn.com##imported-end##

May 19, 2010 at 12:00 AM



“ To Pat and the Family:
I have many fond memories of "The Griffer" when I worked for him at F&G in the 1970's. He was a very good man, a guy totally devoted to his family and proud of his kids. The Blade obituary was really well done. It really captured Griff's essence.##imported-begin##Randall Root rootrc@yahoo.com##imported-end##

May 19, 2010 at 12:00 AM



““ .

*What a wonderful man. We ill miss him.....Love,
Phyllis##imported-begin##Phyllis##imported-end##*

May 19, 2010 at 12:00 AM



““

What a loving tribute to a wonderful "handsome" guy. Uncle Griff will be missed by all who knew and loved him. Keeping you all in our thoughts and prayers.##imported-begin##Mike and Anne Frick121@aol.com##imported-end##

May 19, 2010 at 12:00 AM



““

Nancy, Pat, Griff and Brian: Joe and I are thinking of you all. From the obituary, it sounds like you're already deep into the fond, happy memories of "Handsome" Griff Watkins.##imported-begin##Denise and Joe Joyce djoyce435@mac.com##imported-end##

May 19, 2010 at 12:00 AM