

## Remembering Donna Heinsbroek – Pay It Forward!



Last summer, while returning home from the Chicago NABC, I inadvertently attempted to move ahead of a couple also waiting at the airport. I apologized; they were most kind.

We began to chat. Out of the blue, the wife said to me, “Do you play bridge?” Of course, I replied in the affirmative – and suddenly, I realized that I had met Donna Heinsbroek before!

Donna traveled from Savannah, Georgia to compete in our 2014 Gopher Regional. Co-Chairman Patti Stuhlman introduced us in the last minutes of the tournament; I told Donna how glad we were to have her in Minnesota – and snapped some photos.

Now, a year later, Donna and I chatted about the nationals, how much we loved bridge, and how thrilled she was to have become a Life Master. When Donna told me that she was going to cut back on her playing, however, I encouraged her to “go for it” – play as much as she could and forge ahead! Always the cheerleader for our game, I sang the praises of competing.

It was then that Donna held her hands, face up, to me. “I don’t understand,” I said.

“I have Stage IV cancer,” Donna replied. “I’m not sure how much I will be able to compete.”

I held Donna’s hands and looked into her eyes. What could I say?

As we waited for our respective flights, we continued to talk. I learned about what an accomplished woman she was. Donna’s resume was most impressive: a foreign service specialist, lauded with awards – plus achievements in softball and tennis. Now, Donna had added bridge successes to the list. In 2014, while fighting cancer, she won the national 2014 Mini-McKenney Award in her category, blasting ahead of other contenders with a huge 402.35 total.

Then, each went our respective ways; Hans and Donna to Savannah, I to Minneapolis. We corresponded a bit. Eventually, responses ended.

A week ago, I received a message from Hans. Donna’s journey had ended on May 5th. A remembrance of Donna from husband Hans is below.

You may wonder why I am sharing this story with you. First is how bridge, the most amazing game there is, connects people from all over the world in a most unique manner. Second, I wish to honor Donna in a way that will benefit all of us.

“No flowers or donations,” were included in Hans’ obituary. Yet, he had one request. “Pay it forward.” In memory of Donna, Hans asks that something kind be done for others.

So, I ask of you, the bridge community, please honor a lady who came to the Gopher, with your own act of kindness. Choose whatever would be meaningful to you. “Pay it forward” as you see fit.

Then, email me ([mrmollo@aol.com](mailto:mrmollo@aol.com)) describing your choice. I shall share your thoughtfulness with Hans.

Let us demonstrate how bridge is far more than “just a game”!

Many thanks – Peg Kaplan

## Donna Marchae Heinsbroek



Donna Marchae Heinsbroek of Washington DC, died on May 5, 2016, at the age of 61. Donna excelled in everything she did in her life through sheer willpower and dedication, both professionally and in sports.

Her career highlights were: three years at the White House under President George H.W. Bush centered around the Gulf War; and Secretary of the Year Award at the State Department in 1995. As an athlete she played semi-professional softball and was a US amateur tennis champion twice. Bridge became her passion in 2008 and in 2014 she became North American Mini McKinney

bridge champion in her category.

Donna touched the hearts of numerous people and made her husband the happiest he has ever been.

Donna waged the fight against cancer despite the odds and prolonged the fight for almost three years. Donna lived these years upbeat and with reckless abandon until her involuntary surrender.

Her mother Ernestine, husband Hans , children Anthony, Ameka, Elise and Alex, sister Giselle and five brothers Neil, Maurice, Ronnie and Reggie, and Timmy, all family members and friends will cherish the memorable moments Donna generated in their lives.

Donna will be cremated on Friday 13 May in a private ceremony.

Please, no floral arrangements (small bouquets are welcome), no donations. Instead, pay it forward: make a kind gesture to someone in Donna's honor.

On Saturday 14 May from 5:00 till 7:00 p.m, a reception will be held at the Savannah Duplicate Bridge Club, 8511 Ferguson Ave., Savannah, GA. All are welcome to celebrate Donna's life.