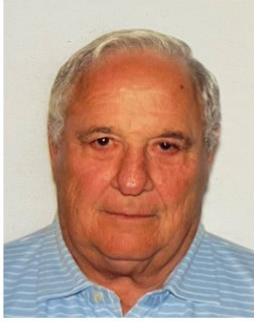


OBITUARY

Benjamin Cone Jr.

AUGUST 19, 1942 - MARCH 23, 2024



Benjamin Cone, Jr. of Greensboro died Saturday, March 23, following a brief illness. He was 81.

Benjie was born in August of 1942, in Greensboro. A graduate of Phillips Exeter Academy, he needed just three years to earn a degree in mathematics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He then completed Officer Candidate School and joined the First Artillery Division – the Big Red One – and as a young Lieutenant, he experienced combat on the front lines of the Vietnam War.

After an honorable discharge he graduated from Harvard Business School. While at UNC, Benjie forgot the name of his blind date (it was Betty) but overcame this early hurdle and was married to that blind date for 57 years. Betty and their two sons (and, eventually, their grandchildren) were at the center of his rich and happy life, which he also shared with his beloved sisters and many friends.

Benjie was kind, curious, outgoing, and generous. He loved hole-in-the-wall restaurants, where no language barrier could prevent him from conversing with staff; playing competitive gin and bridge; ski trips with friends and family; golfing (which always included sharing his trove of golf wisdom and doggerel); and watching Tar Heel athletics.

Funny and fun-loving as he was, Benjie was a soulful and intellectually curious man. Raised an Episcopalian, he converted as an adult to Judaism, the faith of his fathers. He was a dedicated member of Temple Emanuel, an avid participant in Torah study, and the golf coach at the American Hebrew Academy. He rarely spoke of his time in Vietnam but his letters home from that era show a grasp of the military and political situation that would prove sadly realistic.

The long-time co-owner of C.E. Smith Company, a Greensboro metal fabricator, Benjie also applied his business acumen and strategic skills to the family timber farm in eastern North Carolina, where he fulfilled his father's vision of creating and enhancing a wildlife sanctuary, even appearing on the front page of the Wall Street Journal for challenging the federal government over how best to manage habitat for the red-cockaded woodpecker. Benjie's efforts led to the Safe Harbor Agreement for private landowners under the Endangered Species Act.

He served as a trustee of both the Cone Health system and the Cone Health Foundation and believed strongly in their mission of providing quality, non-profit care for all. He supported Betty in her many leadership roles in Greensboro's arts and cultural life, both as a big-picture thinker and as a minion.

Benjamin Cone, Jr. was predeceased by his parents, Benjamin Cone, Sr. and Anne Wortham Cone. He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth (Betty) Ward Cone; sons Benjamin Cone III, aka BC, (Millie Maxwell) and Samuel Martin Cone (Trina); two grandchildren, Darden Elizabeth Cone and William Wortham Cone, who called him Popsie; sisters Jeanette Cone Kimmel and Anne Cone Liptzin (Myron) of Chapel Hill; and innumerable friends around the world, from his earliest days in Greensboro to the Phi Kappa Sigma house in Chapel Hill to the ski group in Austria and to his golf partners at home.

Benjie wore his privilege lightly and took seriously his obligation to leave the world a better place. He will be missed and remembered fondly by many, many people.

His funeral will be held at 2 p.m. on Thursday, March 28, 2024, at Temple Emanuel on Jefferson Road, followed by interment at White Oak Cemetery and a Shiva Minyan at the family home at 5:45 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to The Rabbi's Discretionary Fund at Temple Emanuel, 1129 Jefferson Road, Greensboro, NC 27410 or to the Women's Golf Operating Endowment c/o UNC Educational Foundation, P. O. Box 2446, Chapel Hill, NC 27515. Online condolences may be made at www.haneslineberryfhnorthelm.com