



Robin Gifford Sawyer

January 13, 1951 - January 21, 2019

Born on January 13, 1951, in Northallerton, England, Dr. Robin Sawyer passed away on January 21, 2019 in Charleston, South Carolina following a courageous year-long battle with pancreatic cancer.

Dr. Sawyer's life was largely defined by his commitment to three things; family, education, and athletics.

He retired after a 33-year career at the University of Maryland where his Human Sexuality course was wildly popular on campus. Dr. Sawyer's trademark brand of humor and British wit drew tens of thousands of students into his classroom. He was also well known for his mentorship of undergraduate and graduate students in the Department of Behavioral and Community Health. His tireless commitment to his students earned him some of the most prestigious teaching awards including the University of Maryland System Board of Regents Award for Excellence in Teaching, conferred annually to one of the University's five thousand faculty members. Dr. Sawyer's passion for education was not limited to the classroom and he wrote and produced five educational films that garnered fourteen international and national film awards and are used on over 150 college campuses around the country.

His commitment to education was also a thread that united his professional and personal lives. One of Dr. Sawyer's greatest passions in life was soccer and he dedicated countless thousands of hours to coaching his daughters' teams at various levels, rec, travel, and high school. That role made him a revered teacher, coach, and mentor to dozens of young athletes and their parents who came to view Dr. Sawyer as family. Dr. Sawyer was rarely absent from the stands of a St. Mary's College of Maryland soccer game where he beamed with pride watching his daughter Gillian carry on his own goal-scoring tradition.

Dr. Sawyer was a hero in every sense of the word. Professor Sawyer, Coach Robin, Rob, Dad, whatever name you knew him by, he leaves a legacy that will endure in all of us.

Dr. Sawyer was preceded by his parents, Kenneth and Dorothy Sawyer and is survived by his beloved wife Anne Anderson-Sawyer, sister Judith Chester, four adoring daughters Katherine, Emily, Meg, and Gillian, sons-in-law Nicholas Mazmanian and Richard Doelling, an April grandbaby on the way, an incredibly loving circle of relatives, and of course, his beloved Tottenham Hotspur.

A memorial service will be held on Friday, February 1, 2019 at 1 p.m. at the University of Maryland Memorial Chapel in College Park, Maryland. A brief coffee reception will follow in the Colony Ballroom in the Stamp Student Union.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the American Cancer Society's Hope Lodge. Please make all checks payable to Hope Lodge, New York City and send to 132 West 32nd Street, New York, NY 10001.

Arrangements in care of Charleston Cremation Center and Funeral Home.

Comments



“ To his wife & family - I was recalling an excellent talk he had given at my children's school a few years ago and I hoped to contact him now to ask him to give another presentation to a different group. I am so saddened to see that he has passed. He was such an excellent and effective speaker. I would love to know if anyone else at UM is continuing with his legacy and whether I might contact them. I'm so sorry - a whole year later.

Anthea

anthealevy - February 11, 2020 at 02:31 PM



“ Dr. Sawyer was the best professor I had at Maryland and I will never forget the impact that he made on all of his students each and every class. He was hilarious and inspirational and I will truly never forget him. To his family, I hope that you are able to find peace knowing that Dr. Sawyers impact at UMD was immense. I am sending my prayers and positive thoughts your way. God bless you.

Meg - February 01, 2019 at 12:26 AM



“ Dr. Sawyer was one of my professors at UMD. He taught me in both his human sexuality class and my HLTH420 Methods & Materials class. He was the funniest, most charismatic professor I have had the pleasure to get to know, and probably will ever have. I remember going to his class at 8am in the mornings. Usually, when students sign up for 8am classes you don't see anyone show up until there is a test date. Dr. Sawyers class was full every. single. time. People didn't want to miss his class because he was so hilarious and he had the best humor. I got to know Dr. Sawyer a little better in HLTH420 because it was only a 20 person class tailored to my major. I remember there was a waitlist for his class, people who got in were lucky. Even after I left UMD, Dr. Sawyer and I kept in touch and he wrote me some recommendation letters for school. He was always willing to help his students. I will always will remember him and his legacy that he left at UMD. I'm so sorry for your loss and my deepest sympathy to your family during this time.

Adrienne - January 31, 2019 at 05:48 PM



“ I am saddened by the news that Dr. Sawyer passed away. I had the pleasure of taking his Human Sexuality course back in the 90's. He was such a warm, funny, caring individual; I feel lucky to have been able to enjoy a semester with him. To his wife, children, and future grandchild- I'm sorry and thank you for sharing him with all of us throughout the years.

Scott Grayson PT, DPT - January 31, 2019 at 05:36 PM



“ It is hard to picture a world without Robin. He was a force of nature. Smart, funny, and kind. It was always such a pleasure to see that certain look in his eyes and know that someone was about to feel the full force of that dry British wit. My condolences to Anne, a friend and office mate of many years, and to his beloved daughters.
Maureen Edwards

Maureen Edwards - January 31, 2019 at 05:08 PM



“ Beautiful Dreams was purchased for the family of Robin Gifford Sawyer.



January 31, 2019 at 01:27 PM



“ Sharon & Dave purchased the Joyful Memory for the family of Robin Gifford Sawyer.



Sharon & Dave - January 31, 2019 at 11:24 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Robin Gifford Sawyer.



January 31, 2019 at 11:17 AM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Robin Gifford Sawyer.



January 30, 2019 at 04:00 PM



“ Dreams From the Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Robin Gifford Sawyer.



January 30, 2019 at 12:58 PM



“ My condolences to Anne and the family. Robin was a model of what I hoped to be as a health educator.

Nora Howely - January 30, 2019 at 09:08 AM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Robin Gifford Sawyer.



January 29, 2019 at 09:38 PM



“ Kind, dedicated, funny, skilled, collegial, and, supportive. It was inspiring to watch him work his magic while I was a graduate student. My deepest sympathies to Anne and the rest of the family.
Bonni Hodges

Bonni Hodges - January 29, 2019 at 08:50 PM



“ Dr. Sawyer was the first professor I confided in. I had a tough transitioning into UMD and he always took the time to talk to me and check in with me when I was overwhelmed, he always made me feel comfortable and welcome. I had no idea he was sick, his youthful spirit masked any illness. I'm honored I was able to take his course and share memories with him, he reminds me a lot of my father and this makes me very sad. I will miss you Dr.Sawyer, thank you for everything! I wish I would have visited you more on campus.

Simone Lagergren - January 28, 2019 at 10:46 PM



“ We will always remember his accent. His Mini. Spending Saturday afternoons together on the soccer sidelines. And what a genuinely nice guy. Our deepest sympathy to the family left behind. Clare, Cindy and Greg Bublitz

Cindy Bublitz - January 28, 2019 at 10:29 PM



“ I will never forget how Kind Dr. Sawyer was to me at my final year at UMD! I was pregnant with my first child and overwhelmed also! He made the transition easy for me! I am sadned to hear his passing! I pray for those left behind to always remember his wonderful memory! Rest In Peace my favorite professor!

Sarah - January 28, 2019 at 09:42 PM



“ Robin was an amazing coach to many at Soccer Association of Columbia. He created many smiles on and off the pitch.

Rick Cantore - January 28, 2019 at 09:43 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Robin Gifford Sawyer.



January 27, 2019 at 11:32 AM



“ Your Light Shines was purchased for the family of Robin Gifford Sawyer.



January 26, 2019 at 05:20 PM



“ My wife and I would like to express our deepest condolences to Anne and her family. I was saddened to learn of Robin's passing.

I first met Robin when I joined the faculty in the Department of Health Education at the University of Maryland in 1994. We hit it off immediately, as it felt we were kindred spirits - both enjoying a love of British Blues. During my brief few years at the university, we worked on many research projects together. I was incredibly proud of him when he earned his tenure. He was committed to his teaching, students, and his incredible award winning human sexuality films. He was one of the most dynamic people I have ever met.

Over the years, even after I had left the university, my wife and I would be invited to his house for Christmas dinner with Robin and his beautiful family. I really miss those dinners just talking and laughing for hours. He was incredibly proud of his family, and reveled in their success.

I hope his family finds peace and comfort in this difficult time. Robin will truly be missed.

Rest in peace.

Paul and Cathy Pinciario

Paul Pinciario - January 26, 2019 at 01:29 PM



“ I have early memories from my childhood that feature my dad's good buddy, Robin. He was always smiling and laughing- brightening the room. I was one of the lucky ones who got to take his class in college- equal parts informative and hysterical (exactly as advertised). There is a great shot of him in our wedding video, saying something to me and my wife that had us both cackling. Later, he was gracious enough to let me interview him for a series I was working on, early in my TV news career.

It breaks my heart that he got so sick so soon after retiring but in a way, it brings me comfort that he is no longer suffering. I like to think that he is in heaven now, completely well again, making everyone around him chuckle and trying to get everyone to lighten up.

We have been thinking about him and his family for some time now, and will continue to do so.

Wishing you comfort and peace in this difficult time,

Kenny Beck and family

kenny - January 26, 2019 at 12:34 PM



“ Our hearts are heavy and the world is less bright with the passing of our very dear friend, Robin. No one ever said life would be fair, and this is proof that that adage is so. One likes to be hopeful and offer comforting thoughts, and time and reflection will bring them, but right now Ken's and my hearts are broken. Robin was a dear friend and treasured colleague of Ken. They were "sympatico" in every way, and they often lifted each other up when university machinations caused distress. Anne and I, Candy, are very much alike and so I hurt deeply for her. With the comfort and understanding of her girls, Anne will find strength, and we hope that our love will help to reassure the family that we are here for them. Robin is at peace and need not deal any further with his illness. He knew how many lives he touched and how loved he was and is. May we all hope to pass over leaving the world a better place for our being here.

With our special love always,

Candy and Ken Beck

Candy and Ken Beck - January 24, 2019 at 12:25 PM



“ A sympathy card was purchased for the family of Robin Gifford Sawyer.



January 23, 2019 at 10:28 PM