



Michael Gillespie

May 7, 1940 - July 29, 2020

Please join us in remembering Mike. Through this site we invite you to share your thoughts and fond memories with our family.

Comments



“ I met Mike at College of the Canyons in 1972, when I was 18 and he was 32. Outside of my parents, he was the most influential role model in my life. He was a coach, a father figure, an older brother, a friend and a confidant. His influence molded my perspective on life and I am forever grateful for his friendship. Mike loved his children and Kelly, Mitchell and Matthew were the loves of his life. As a young man, I was so impressed going into Mike's office at College of the Canyon's and seeing the saying, "Cat's in the Cradle," hanging on his office wall. "Cat's in the Cradle," was a song in the early seventies by Harry Chapin, that describes an awkward relationship between a father and son because the father never had time to be a father, as he pursued his career. Mike told me he put that saying on the wall to remind himself everyday that his children were his #1 priority. He was a great Coach but an even better Father. Mike, thank you for taking an interest in me...I Love You, Tom Ottman

Tom Ottman - August 27 at 09:00 AM



“ So as a young impressionable baseball player I meet Mike Gillespie when I played for him in Alaska. Nobody could have predicted the life long impact he would have on me. I patterned my college coaching career and my professional leadership strategies after him. He was my mentor and my adviser throughout my adult life. I can't say I respect anyone more than Mike Gillespie. I considered him a gift to my life and I am blessed to have known him. I will be eternally grateful for his loyalty and friendship he graciously bestowed upon me. I love Mike Gillespie. Rest well. Prayers up!

Bill Geivett - August 11 at 02:07 PM



“ Bill, thank you for sharing my friend

Kelly Kreuter - August 12 at 12:15 PM



“ Thank you, Bill

Matt Gillespie - August 30 at 02:17 PM



“ Thank you for sharing, Bill.

Matt Gillespie - August 30 at 03:01 PM



“ I loved playing for Skip. He arrived at UC Irvine my second year and we didn't know what to expect. I remember one of the first talks he gave us. We were all lined up on the bench in the dugout. He said there would be no rules. When we thought about doing something, we should just use our judgment. This is such a small thing to remember, but it came across to me as being so respectful to us as people.

He was always giving talks--long, long talks--to the players. During each practice probably an hour was devoted to his talks, usually with the players circled around him, somewhere out in left field. What a gift it was. He had so much life experience at this point. I honestly don't remember everything he said, but I know it made us grow up. It was all about baseball, but it was how to be wise. I still use his phrases, ten years on.

I always loved Skip's coaching style. He had that mix of serious competitiveness and relaxed playfulness you see in people who have reached the pinnacle of their profession. He treated baseball like it was, a game. You wouldn't believe the amount of time we spent on trick plays: the hidden ball trick (which we pulled off in the super regional at LSU) and the baserunner fake trip are a couple examples. He would have 20 of us lined up in left field, each taking 4 steps and then tripping ourselves. These were our afternoons for 3 years.

Skip could get mad, too. One time he accused one of our players of having a “hummingbird heart” after striking out looking with the bases loaded. The kid nearly (and probably actually) cried. But Skip's statements, although they sometimes cut deep, were always right. I now see, into my thirties, that Skip talked to us like executives talk to their equals.

I don't know what made Skip such a successful coach, but something sticks out to me more than anything during my time. The time Skip seemed the proudest to me wasn't after a home run, or a great play on defense, or even when we won the game. I felt Skip was proudest, and you could see it, at least I thought I could, when there was a runner on second base with no outs and our batter would hit the ball to the second basemen, “moving the runner over” to third base. Hitting the ball intentionally this way is a “sacrifice” since doing so lowers the batter's chance of a hit, but it is good for the team, since now the runner can score without a hit from third. It was subtle, but you could tell Skip loved it when you did that. They say you get the behavior you reward, and Skip rewarded sacrifices for the team. This kind of leadership lesson will be with us for the rest of our lives.

Those 3 years with Skip were some of the best of my life. I feel lucky and grateful for having him in my life and I'm certain the world is a better place because of him.

Francis Larson
(UC Irvine 2006 - 2010)



“ Francis, thank you for sharing. It’s so nice to read your words.

Kelly Kreuter - August 12 at 12:16 PM



“ RIP Skip. He always made us “Docs” feel a part of the team. Very thoughtful and caring, his first 2 questions of the day were always, “how are you doing today?” and “how’s the family?” He also made everyone feel like they were the center of attention, no matter what he was busy doing. Forever blessed to have known Mike “Skip” Gillespie!



PD - August 06 at 03:30 PM



“ Thank you for sharing

Kelly Kreuter - August 06 at 06:01 PM



“ A few years ago I was blessed to spend a few precious hours with Mike. We hadn’t seen each other for many years but how he embraced me and called me Donnie was so warm and genuine I truly felt like family. I had played for Canyons in 1974 and 75 but Mike made me feel like it was yesterday. His memory was unbelievable and his recollection of details was truly uncanny. It’s been a long time since I have played the game but I have used many of the lessons I learned from my mentor and friend and have passed them on to my sons and many of the young Men I have coached. I didn’t realize that the few hours I spent with Mike would be our last together on this earth. I am deeply saddened by his passing but so blessed that we were friends. I am very sorry for the Gillespie family’s loss and to all of you who loved this man. Thank you Mike for those beautiful baseball and life moments that will live with me forever. Rest In Peace Mike, your friend Donnie J.

Don Johnson - August 07 at 03:16 PM



“ Donnie, thank you for sharing Kelly

Kelly Kreuter - August 12 at 12:19 PM



“ Where to begin....A 42 year relationship as a player/coach, assistant/head coach, as competing coaches and as a father of one of his players. It's hard to find the perfect story as there are so many. He was just the most influential man in my professional life. He taught me that there is a reason for everything that you do on the field and that there is a counter move to all of them. He convinced me there IS a reason to practice eight bunt defenses and 5 first and third defenses. It/he prepared you. Everyone called him Skip, but I couldn't get myself to do it. It seemed too casual or too personal and I thought he deserved the title of coach. So, that is what I called him. He had an impact on me that gave me a direction and a purpose, and for that, I can never repay him.

I will miss the mechanical pencil in the hat and the occasional conversations that he had with umpires. I will miss his presence and his undeniable loyalty. I will miss that ever distinctive laugh. I will continue to say "what the hell!" and think of him every time I do.

My deepest condolences to the Gillespie Family circle and to all who loved him.

Bob Brontsema

Bob Brontsema - August 06 at 01:13 PM



“ Bob...perfect. Thank you for sharing

Kelly Kreuter - August 06 at 06:04 PM



“ Thank you, Bob

Matt Gillespie - August 30 at 02:28 PM



“ I'm so thankful for everyone's condolences



Mitch Gillespie - August 05 at 04:56 PM



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Kelly Kreuter - August 05 at 11:34 PM



“ First class as a person and one of the greatest college baseball coaches of all time. My remembrance started in 1980 when i was the baseball coach at Antelope Valley College. We played Mike's teams at College of the Canyons and during that time i worked for Mike at his baseball camps during the Christmas recess. One of the best at making a new guy on the block feel welcome and i was welcomed to his home for holiday dinners. Later years i moved to the East Coast and Mike and i kept in touch via emails and phone calls - loved to talk baseball but more importantly Mike always talked about the relationships he had with former coaches and friends. The Baseball Community of Southern California has many great names of coaches,scouts and players. None better than Mike. It is with the deepest sympathy i extend my best to his family. The loss is too great to express in a few words. Rest in Peace. A privilege to have him in our life.

Dave Trembley
Daytona Beach Shores, Florida

dave trembley - August 05 at 04:34 PM



“ Dave, so beautiful! Thank you for sharing Kelly

Kelly Kreuter - August 05 at 11:29 PM



“ Dave, Thank you very much.

Matt Gillespie - August 30 at 02:34 PM



“ When I think of my time at USC with Skip I can honestly say baseball isn't the first thing that comes to mind. I think of how he molded me into a man, how he prepared me mentally to deal with the rest of my life, how instilled Trojan values into me, how he taught me to have passion and accountability. Rest In Peace Skip.

Cyle Hankerd - August 04 at 09:33 PM



“ Cycle, Awesome words! Thank you for sharing Kelly

Kelly Kreuter - August 05 at 11:30 PM



“ 4 files added to the tribute wall



Matt Gillespie - August 04 at 07:58 PM



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Kelly Kreuter - August 12 at 12:20 PM



“ What a great loss. Mike was a real caring individual a man everyone loved to play for. This is a fun little story about Mike. In 1997 i was the Head Coach of the French National team and we were in a tournament in Barcelona, Spain. The American team was also there Coached by Mike and Bob Milano. We opened the tournament with Cuba. In the stands was Mike scouting Cuba After the game Mike came up to me and told me the umpire was not giving us anything. Then he kinda of looked around and then asked if he could have a ride back to the Hotel. I thought this was funny because they were playing the next game. Once on buss i asked Mike why he was going back to the Hotel. In a very low voice he sald he had on wrong uniform and Bob told him to go back put on right uniform. We both had a good laugh.

May God welcome you with open arms.

Al Endriss

Al Endriss - August 04 at 07:25 PM



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Great story Al! Thank you for sharing. Kelly

Kelly Kreuter - August 04 at 09:14 PM



“ I've known Coach Gillespie since I was 18 years old and a freshman at Pepperdine University... we always use to play the College of the Canyons in the fall and it was neat to be able to coach against him as I became a college coach over the years and compete against his great USC teams. He always took the time to make you feel welcomed. Coach Gillespie was an icon and will be sorely missed. His son n law Chad was a teammate of mine also at Pepperdine and I can remember back in the days when Kelli and him were dating... good memories: 1:

Tim Montez - August 04 at 05:55 PM



“ Awww! Thank you for sharing Tim

Kelly Kreuter - August 04 at 09:15 PM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Michael Gillespie.



August 04 at 12:14 PM



“ There isn't one memory I can share about Skip. He was more than a story or a memory for me because he was such a special person in my heart. Skip was a person who would always make you feel special, make you a better person, and make you laugh out loud with his sharp wit and sense of humor.

I am honored to have been able to call Mike "Skip" Gillespie a friend of mine and cherish all of the moments I had with him, both between the lines or out in the world. He was a strong, intelligent, caring, honorable man who was taken far too soon. The world is a bit darker without the light of his life.

I will miss you dearly Skip. May God bless you and your family! We were all blessed to have you in our lives!

Chris "Doc" Grosskopf - August 04 at 11:09 AM



“ Amazing Chris! Thank you for sharing

Kelly Kreuter - August 04 at 09:18 PM



“ 9 files added to the album Skip



Chris "Doc" Grosskopf - August 04 at 10:59 AM



“ Great photos Chris! Thank you

Kelly Kreuter - August 12 at 12:21 PM



“ My condolences to the Gillespie family. From 1981 to 1983 I had some amazing times with my teammates at COC and won a State Title in 83. Mike was the best coach I ever had in my career. I also went to Alaska and played for the North Pole Nicks in summer ball. Rest In Peace Coach Gillespie. From Ted Higgins



Ted Higgins - August 04 at 12:51 AM



“ Ted, awesome pictures! Thank you for sharing

Kelly Kreuter - August 04 at 09:16 PM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Chris Lamano - August 03 at 05:40 PM



“ Chris

Kelly Kreuter - August 04 at 12:07 AM



“ Our son played for Coach Gillespie for four years. After college, Parker received an honor from the baseball program at his high school. Coach Gillespie came and spoke at the ceremony. I will never forget all the wonderful things he said about Parker. Up on that stage, Coach was very poised and humble -- and funny! I'm so glad our family had the opportunity to know him. Rest in peace, Skip. The Coss Family

Lori Coss - August 03 at 05:31 PM



“ Beautiful Lori

Kelly Kreuter - August 04 at 12:09 AM



“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Kelly Kreuter - August 02 at 11:50 PM