



## Craig R. Olsen

April 9, 1945 - November 28, 2018

Craig R. Olsen, 73, of Grand Island, beloved husband, loving father, and proud grandfather, passed away Wednesday, November 28, 2018 at his home, surrounded by his family.

Service and celebration of Craig's life will be held at 11:00 a.m. Saturday, December 8th at All Faiths Funeral Home in Grand Island. Dan Naranjo will officiate. A gathering of family and friends will be from 5-7 p.m. on Friday, December 7th at All Faiths.

Craig was born on April 9, 1945, in Holdrege, Nebraska, to Robert and Betty (Aten) Olsen. He graduated from Holdrege High School in 1963. Craig attended McCook Junior College in McCook, NE, and Western State College in Gunnison, CO, receiving his Bachelor's degree in 1967.

He moved to Grand Island, where he worked for Auto Club Insurance as a Claims Manager for 40 years. Craig married Sallie Linden in 1965 and they had two sons, Trevr and Todd, who along with their spouses, Brenda and Michelle, gave Craig four grandsons, whom he adored. In 1994, Craig married Gina (Vitt) Bigelow and he loved her three boys and their families as his own. His love of sports was a big part of his life. As a testimony to his athleticism, Craig received a four-year scholarship to play basketball at the collegiate level, displaying his fierce competitiveness, despite being chest high to most of the players (resulting in a few bloody lips/noses). After many years of playing fast-pitch softball and highly competitive traveling basketball, Craig made many friends and great memories with teammates and opponents alike.

Craig's success in racquetball spanned almost 50 years, earning him 37 state titles, 11 regional titles, and 6 national titles. Anyone who witnessed Craig dominate a racquetball court knew what an impassioned competitor he truly was. This intensity was recognized when Craig was chosen as Athlete of the Year from 19,250 participants at the 1995 Cornhusker State Games.

Craig had many interests, including fishing trips to Canada and Alaska, summer golf leagues, early morning goose, duck and deer hunts, and spending weekends at Johnson Lake with his boys, a retreat he loved. Craig knew how to appreciate the simplest pleasures...a sunny patio in Palm Springs with the hummingbirds and local waterfowl, relaxing days at the lake, or Monday morning coffee with his buddies. Craig's ever-present sense of humor endeared him to all who knew him. No matter how you knew Craig, you heard him say many times, "Every day's a good day." That's what made Craig special, his ability to make everyone he came in contact with feel the joy of living.

Even with all of his activities, Craig's greatest passion was his family. He was quoted in a March 7, 2011 article for the Grand Island Independent when he was chosen as an Extraordinary Person: "Racquetball isn't my life; my kids and wife and family are my life..." The gifts Craig gave to his family will always be cherished ...unconditional love, living life to the fullest, appreciating the thrill of sports, an appreciation of the outdoors, and being a loving example of patience and acceptance. Craig was a man of tremendous character, inner strength, unwavering integrity and gentle kindness; he made a difference in so many lives. He leaves a legacy of laughter and fond memories with each of us and is already greatly missed.

Craig is survived by his wife, Gina; his mother, Betty; sons, Trevr (Brenda) and their sons, Garret and Gavin, and Todd (Michelle) and their sons, Jacob and Ethan; three stepsons, Scott (Maggie), Steve (Gina), and Mark (Sheila), and their families; brothers, Ken (Diane), Calvin (Barb) and Clark (Joyce); and his sisters, Karen Newcomb, Candy (Gary) Fader and Kristi Olsen.

Craig was preceded in death by his father, Bob.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests contributions to Special Olympics, Make-A-Wish Foundation or to the donor's choice in Craig's memory.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Craig R. Olsen*

October 08, 2023 at 11:02 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Craig R. Olsen.*



December 06, 2018 at 03:32 PM



“ *Be My Love Bouquet with Red Roses was purchased for the family of Craig R. Olsen.*



December 06, 2018 at 02:04 PM



“ *So very sorry for your loss Gina. Lifting you and your family in prayer.*

**Lynn Gipe** - December 06, 2018 at 09:20 AM

MJ

“ Thought and Prayers to the family...Craig and my dad, Bill Julian were great friends. If I remember the story correctly, my Dad helped get Craig started playing raquetball, and it wasn't very long before Craig was "whooping his ass" as my Dad put it. I remember the good times on Del Monte Ave growing up, going fishing at the cabin at Plum Creek, the "road hunting" trips. All great memories. Revel in the memories as you remember your Dad, Husband, and Grandfather.

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**Marc Julian** - December 04, 2018 at 10:10 AM

TG

“ Peace and prayers to Craig's family. I got to know Craig through years of playing racquetball when I was a fledgling novice at the Grand Island YMCA. You knew you raised to a certain level when you could play on Craig's court for a game of singles (of course I never beat him) cut throat or better yet, be paired with him at noon or on a Saturday morning for doubles. Craig was know as The King for a reason and deservedly so. But even better and what stayed with me more was his personality, congeniality and willingness to offer helpful suggestions and tips without being asked. Craig was equally respected on and off the court and while I didn't know Craig on a deep personal level, he transcended kindness and respect. Wishing you peace to bring comfort, courage to face the days ahead and loving memories to forever hold in your heart.

*Tracey Ginger*

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**Tracey Ginger** - December 04, 2018 at 09:01 AM