

# We Wave Goodbye to Wag

He walked around the club in his tennis whites with a purpose. He may not always have been conducting important business, but he looked like it.

Ken Wagstaff was one of a kind. His visionary ways in building the Sarasota Bath & Racquet are well documented. But besides the resume, there was a hugely endearing side to this little man with the jug ears, raspy voice and waddle.

I didn't know Ken for decades like his beloved wife Penny or his photogenic protégé Andy McCurry. I only met Ken six years earlier but was in awe of what he accomplished with his hard work and long hours.

A few years ago, I was invited to play in Ken's regular Sunday morning doubles group with Dave Boeck and Rich Ferguson. I was honored to be included—and always made sure to dress in tennis whites for the occasion out of respect



Ken Wagstaff and Ray Collins

for Ken. (I liked what Ken brought to tennis, and if I could honor him by dressing in white shorts and a white collared shirt when we were on the court, then so be it.)

He was always first to arrive, brought a new can of balls and couldn't wait to start. He lined up half a dozen pairs of gloves on the court along the fence and changed gloves every two games...something about a sun allergy.

Change-overs between games could be frustrating with Ken. The slightest diversion could send him off toward telling another detailed story of playing tennis in some distant tournament in Texas back in the '50's,

or how he and his roommate got along in college. He loved telling stories about his history in tennis, and didn't mind telling the same ones over and over—and we didn't mind hearing them again. People gave Ken a wide berth. He didn't have a mean bone in his body, he did his thing and expected others to do theirs.

One Sunday morning we were talking about funerals and memorial services. He said, "When I die, I want to have a reception at Selby Gardens and have everyone show up in tennis clothes, with music, drinking, dancing and FUN."

I wise-cracked, "That sounds great, Ken, I can't wait!" Ken giggled along with the other guys.

I never expected that service to be held two short years later. It was just as beautiful and celebratory as he had wanted. I miss that little guy in the tennis whites.

Ray Collins is a member of Bath & Racquet and runs [RayCollinsMedia.com](http://RayCollinsMedia.com)

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