

# THOMAS ‘GOOSE’ KAISER

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN

**W**ords. At the end of life, at our funerals, words are all there is left. Kind words. Loving words. Words of fond remembrance. And when a beverage industry legend such as Tom “Goose” Kaiser dies and the assignment is given to write his tribute article, a word limit comes with it. So, rather than wow you with my usual compelling prose, I’ll let the words of those who knew this extraordinary man best speak for his life.

People like Jane Springer, Executive Director of the Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association (MSLBA). She noted that Goose “often presented a tough exterior, but those who didn’t know him would probably be surprised to know what a compassionate and loyal friend he was. Goose took the time to be there for me at a very sad time and also to celebrate a very happy time. I was very grateful for his company.”

Lobbyist Bruce Bereano added, “During all of the years I knew him – not only in Annapolis, but politically around the state – he 100% cared about other people regardless of color, religious, or political affiliation. That was his secret strength.”

Jeri Zink, the Baltimore County Licensed Beverage Association’s (BCLBA’s) Executive Director, shared that Goose was many things to her over the years – advisor; mentor; father figure; but most importantly, a friend. She recalled, “He was genuinely interested in knowing about my life and of those important to me. He asked about my children, wanted to know where they were going to school, what career path they chose. Never a holiday went by that I didn’t receive a text from him – ‘Happy Mother’s Day, Dear!’ – with an emoji heart and flowers. Goose understood the value of relationships, both in business and personal.”

Kaiser, who died of cancer on August 12 at age 87, knew the busi-



ness and the personal. In business, he opened the Wishing Well in 1969 in Baltimore County. In 1989, he opened the Bay Café on the Canton waterfront in Tindecó Wharf. He was a past President of the BCLBA and served as MSLBA’s Legislative Co-Chair for more than 30 years.

MSLBA lobbyist and Legal Counsel Steve Wise, remarked, “Goose knew what he was doing in the bar and restaurant business, and everyone knew that. What they may not know is that he was very savvy at politics, too. Goose was streetwise and he knew how to get things done in Annapolis like few others.”

Kevin Dunn, retired Regional President, East for Breakthru Beverage, marveled, “His commitment to our industry was incredible. Goose was at every association meeting, every legislative hearing, and at every vote concerning the beverage alcohol business.”

Nick Manis, Executive Director of the Maryland Beer Wholesalers Association (MBWA), issued the following statement for the

## IN MEMORIAM

Beverage Journal to run: “Goose was a mainstay in the legislative hallways with Jack Milani and was instrumental in forging the MBWA’s relationship with MSLBA when times weren’t as cordial. He taught and educated me on the industry and assisted MBWA with their legislative agenda throughout the years.”

Milani, MSLBA’s other long-time Legislative co-Chair, stated, “I knew who he was, but I really got to know him when we started doing legislative work together in the early ‘90s. His relationships in Annapolis were just phenomenal. He had a lot of respect among the legislators because he always told them the truth even if they didn’t want to hear it. He felt we were truly the last small, independent businesses, and he was going to make sure we were treated fairly.”

Past BCLBA President Marty Kutlik, owner of Ridgely Wines & Spirits, recalls having served two years as the association’s Vice President when Kaiser stepped down as President. It was my job to thank him for his service and present him with a parting gift. He recalled, “Jeri Zink and I came up with a new gift idea – a gold President’s ring. As he accepted, you could tell it had touched his heart, and a tear came to his eye. He stated, ‘I will wear it until I am six feet under.’”

Attorney Susan Green (pictured below) has long chaired the Baltimore County Liquor Board. “Mr. Kaiser served alongside me for the last five and a half years,” she said. “No one knew the food and



beverage industry better than Goose. He spent many years lobbying on behalf of the industry, which provided the Board with the legislative history behind many of the rules in existence today.”

Green and Chaunte Thomas, Administrator on the Board of Liquor License Commissioners for Baltimore County, both fondly remember the so-called “Old Goose Tales” he would tell about days gone by once meetings were concluded. But one particular day stood out for Thomas during COVID when Green was unavailable and Kaiser had to rely on technology: “I downloaded the Webex app on his smartphone and did a trial run, only for him to end up in the office and using my desktop computer to conduct the hearing. Though it seemed to have been a waste of time doing ‘Cellphone 101,’ it was never a waste of time being in his presence!”

As for the personal, Goose is survived by his daughter, Judy Ruth of Towson; his son, Andy Kaiser of Delaware; two grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. A daughter, Tracey Kaiser, died in 2002; and another son, Tommy Kaiser, passed away in 2004. In terms of his interests, he was a fervent supporter of Baltimore’s professional sports teams. Kaiser would charter buses to take fans to Orioles’ Opening Day, and he organized trips to Cooperstown, N.Y., for Baseball Hall of Fame inductions.

On that note, Matt Cairns, District Manager at Republic National Distributing Company, summed Goose Kaiser up best: “He loved all of the Baltimore sports teams, but his passion was offshore fishing. I picture him riding into Heaven in his Eldorado with the top down, Hawaiian shirt, Crown and water in his hand, looking for all his friends that have passed before him. ■