



Andrew MacNamara Pons

May 31, 1953 - January 2, 2024

Andrew MacNamara Pons, a highly respected addiction counselor on Maryland's Eastern Shore, died on Tuesday evening, January 2, following complications from cardiac arrest five days earlier. He was 70 years old.

Born in Baltimore on May 31, 1953, he was the oldest son of Joseph and Mary Jo Pons. He grew up on his family's Country Life Farm near Bel Air. After graduating from The John Carroll School in 1971, he began work as an assistant for Hall-of-Fame horse trainer Henry S. Clark at Delaware Park. He was called back to the family farm to manage the historic Thoroughbred nursery through the late 1970s. His equine experience included a term in the stallion division of Spendthrift Farm in Lexington, Kentucky, where he met Marva Jones. The couple returned to Maryland and were married at Country Life in 1986.

With the support of family in 1991, Pons enrolled in a 28-day, in-patient treatment course at Father Martin's Ashley Addiction Center in Havre de Grace. Thereupon, he determined to finish college and persevered through 10 years of night-school to graduate with a Master of Science Human Services Administration degree from the University of Baltimore in 2002. He would later quip: "I finished my sophomore year of college 27 years after my freshman year."

As the son of a recovering father in the Alcoholics Anonymous program, Pons

faced the disease of alcoholism with wry humor: "If I'm carrying a gene for addiction, then I must also be carrying a gene for recovery." He put that gene to good use, became a counselor at Ashley, then relocated to Chestertown to live on Marva's family farm, Belle Grove, on Langford Creek in Kent County. He was named clinical director of the A. F. Whitsett Center in Chestertown, a vital facility for those suffering from substance use disorder.

"He won the confidence of his patients through his wit and humor," said Ashley colleague Jeffrey Gross. "He treated alcoholics and drug addicts not as bad people trying to get good, but as sick people trying to get well."

His life in recovery brought redemption. Not only did he rededicate himself to his family, he rediscovered exciting pursuits. Decades after being a starting midfielder on the 1970 John Carroll championship team, he became a member of the Mr. Boh Lacrosse Club and played in tournaments from Australia to England, often accompanied by his young nephews, ball boys for the Mr. Boh team. As a coach for youth leagues, he put lacrosse sticks into the hands of many youngsters who later carried their skills to the college level. He played for the Mr. Boh team until his mid-60s.

"More than a few tears are being shed today," wrote his longtime teammate Dave Burns before e-mailing the news to the Mr. Boh family. "Rest in peace, Andy."

He also enjoyed sailing the waterways of the Chesapeake Bay, finding sandbars with surprising frequency. He once arrived fashionably late and covered in mud to his own AA anniversary meeting, apologizing: "You'll never guess where I've been!"

"Sailing?" guessed the group.

His brother Josh said: "Every family has a favorite uncle, and Andrew was ours. His nicknames for nephews and nieces stuck, like Wee Marva, Gus, Big

Dave, Bootsie, Phil, JP3, Sparkle. They learned so much from him, and what a positive example he set for us all.”

He shared his wisdom through humor. To his farm-boy nephews, he offered vital instruction on how to use a chain saw safely: “If it bleeds, don’t cut it.”

An active, outdoors life he lived right to the end. He was playing pickleball with Chestertown pals at the Y when he collapsed. The University of Maryland Shore Medical Center transferred him by ambulance to Christiana Care Hospital, adjacent to Delaware Park Racetrack. He was admitted to the Mr. and Mrs. Harry W. Lunger Cardiac Intensive Care Unit.

“How appropriate,” said Josh. “The Lunger’s owned Christiana Stable, based at Delaware Park. That’s where Andrew worked for Mr. Clark, who was the first to truly recognize what a fine young horseman he was.”

“I’ve known him since grade school,” said a Bel Air AA member. “He was a presence even back then. I remember when he introduced himself. ‘My name is Andrew MacNamara Pons. What’s yours?’ I knew him 60 years. He gave up a life with horses---something he loved---to spend his life helping other alcoholics. That’s a powerful statement of who he was. That’s what stands out about him as a man. That’s what we’ll remember. That he helped others.”

Said Eastern Shore goose-hunting guide and kindred spirit Steve Goss: “It’s not fair. He’s here on Christmas Day handing out trail mix as presents, then he’s gone. Didn’t drink, didn’t smoke, didn’t figure to be the one to leave us.”

Pons is survived by his wife of 38 years, Marva, his stepdaughter Karianna Johnson (Tom) Brace, granddaughters Ellie and Minna; his siblings Norah Pons, Josh (Ellen) Pons, Mike (Lisa) Pons, and Alice Pons; Marva’s siblings

BJ Jones, Keith (Nancy) Jones, Jonathan (Beverly) Jones and Steven (Caroline) Jones. Nieces and nephews: Tess Jones, Marva Kumpf, Ben Jones, Lindsay (Matt) Diehl, Charlotte Jones, Christopher Jones, Alexander Jones, Philip (Lindsay) Pons, Elizabeth (Garrett) Forsberg, Josh (Shelby) Pons, Dave (Maggie Clough) Pons, and August (Hayley) Pons.

Remembrances of life are in the planning stages for late spring, one at Belle Grove and another at Country Life, for the convenience of his many friends. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to a favorite cause of his: The Mann House, Inc., 14 Williams Street, Bel Air, Maryland 2014, a 501 (c) 3 non-profit recovery residence where he often attended AA meetings.

“Andrew was that rare breed, that rare personality,” said lacrosse teammate Jim Ulman. “I’ll be thinking about him for a long, long time.”

He will forever be remembered for his impact on the lives of others. Recalled his brother Mike: “If you asked Andy how he was doing, without fail, he would remind you, ‘It’s a good life, ain’t it?’”

Tribute Wall

DB

“ Because Andrew was so special, I looked him up tonight to see how he was doing after so many years since we worked together at Father Martin’s. I adored him. He was a great friend to me back then. I have lots of hilarious stories about him. We had a little lunch thing we had along with some other friends at Ashley. Andrew was the only male in our little lunch group and he took some of our choices for dining in stride. I will never forget him sitting there having little tea sandwiches and delicacies at the local tea room. Well, when it was his turn to pick the restaurant, he told all of us that the place he chose had “ambiance beyond our imaginations.” He said that it had beautiful music. You could choose to eat in or outdoors. You could order anything you wanted. They had steak, seafood, sandwiches, freshly baked bread and cakes. Well, we all followed him in our cars as he lead us to the local grocery store! I could not stop laughing. We used to talk a lot about school because we both returned to college later in life and were working together on our degrees while at Ashley. It’s hard to believe that we were all ever so young. I still have the Country Life Farms hat that he gave me all those years ago. I remember Andrew as a dedicated counselor, a loving and proud husband, father, brother, uncle, and son. Family was his thing, for sure. A great sportsman. He loved music, movies, and definitely horses. I hate that he’s gone. Only the good die young. Rest Well Andrew. You will never be forgotten. Prayers for his beloved cherished family.
Donna Burke (Sentz) Colleague and Friend from the old Ashley days,

Donna Burke - May 28, 2025 at 04:27 AM

BD

“ I have fond memories of the laughs we had meeting for lunch.

Bill Dougherty - January 23, 2025 at 02:20 PM

FB

“ I played rugby with Andy in he Baltimore Rugby Club - a significant part of my acclimatization process to living in the USA. Not withstanding his diminutive size (for a ruggar player) he was an utterly fierce competitor. I am so sorry to hear of his passing - one by one they slip away. We lost touch after I left Baltimore - it is so good to read what a productive life he led. I am sure he will be missed

Frank Booth - May 28, 2024 at 12:15 PM

RK

“ My first job in recovery was at Country Life Farms. Andrew was a power of example in my early recovery. Andrew you will missed. My prayers to your whole family.. Rest in peace..my friend.

Robert kinneberg - January 12, 2024 at 04:01 PM

MF

“ He will be missed. I enjoyed playing against Andy when he played for Mr. Boh, and also in indoor pickup games in the winter. He was always smiling and just happy to be playing with his friends.

This quote from the story says it all: “He gave up a life with horses—something he loved—to spend his life helping others (with addiction) That's a powerful statement of who he was”.

Michael Frederick - January 07, 2024 at 02:53 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Andrew MacNamara Pons.



January 07, 2024 at 11:56 AM

BB

“ *The most humble horseman/counselor I have ever met. He is missed dearly. 😞*

Betsy Brawner - January 07, 2024 at 06:32 AM

LS

“ *Andrew was a great man and a wonderful neighbor. He will be missed. Our love to his family.*

Libby & Scott - January 06, 2024 at 12:21 PM

DI

“ *Andrew was a part of our pickleball family and he would always catch me off guard with his left handed hits that always had spins. He will be missed. My deepest sympathy to the family.*

Diane - January 06, 2024 at 11:52 AM

NS

“ *Nancy Spencer lit a candle in memory of Andrew MacNamara Pons*



Nancy Spencer - January 06, 2024 at 11:32 AM

RW

“ *I met Andrew way too late but enjoyed every moment! He is missed and will be remembered for a long time.*

Rick Wirtz - January 06, 2024 at 11:15 AM

SE

“ *Condolences to the Pons family*

Sally Eck - January 06, 2024 at 09:40 AM

AA

Condolences to the Pons family.

Antonio Hansby. I rode races for Andrew. - January 06, 2024 at 11:30 AM

PW

“ *Patti Webb lit a candle in memory of Andrew MacNamara Pons*



Patti Webb - January 06, 2024 at 09:12 AM

TO

“ *As my father, who was an old US Army cavalry man would say "He ran a good race ". He certainly did. Miss you*

Tom - January 05, 2024 at 09:46 PM

CP

“ *I worked with Andrew during his stint with ESPS where he organized and ran our IOP program in Chestertown. I remember thinking this is a man who I would like to get to know better. I am sad for his death and am holding his family in the light.*

Constance Pullen - January 05, 2024 at 06:26 PM

JW

“ I am so sorry to learn of Andrew’s passing. May Peace and Grace embrace Andrew, his family, and his many friends. Andrew’s smile, sense of humor, curiosity, practicality, love of horses, and commitment to recovery are remembrances and examples I will carry with me. With gratitude to have known Andrew, for the Blessings of Andrew’s amazing journey from many starting gates to this finish line, and for small, now cherished, moments talking about horses and real-life stuff over cups of coffee, I offer condolences at this sad time, James Wood

James Wood - January 05, 2024 at 01:29 PM

SH

“ Coach Pons led teams for both of my sons through the community lacrosse program. His patience, sense of humor, and clarity helped both of my kids truly open up and enjoy the sport, not just grind for a score -- that’s a gift that each of them carries today. Andrew was a generous spirit in this community and he will be deeply missed.

Samantha Hollomon - January 05, 2024 at 10:31 AM

HS

“ Andrew was so kind, helpful, and funny. I really enjoyed talking with him. He helped me so much and I will carry his wisdom with me forever. I am saddened by his loss, but grateful to have gotten to know him. Much love to his wife, children, family, and friends.

Holly Schrader - January 05, 2024 at 07:54 AM

HH

“ I met Andrew through pickleball. He was always the life of the party, a shrug when the ball was out and a twinkle of the eye when hitting a winner. Kind and good natured. Always happy

Helen A. Heinzer - January 04, 2024 at 09:46 PM

BC

“ Andrew was funny and kind. He always had a great smile and attitude. I am saddened I won't be able to play Pickleball with him again. I wish his family Peace. I am sure he is in a better place.

Brian Cole - January 04, 2024 at 09:30 PM

CH

“ Andrew, was so much more than my cousin, he was my friend. He was there when I came back to farm to work. I had my youngest with me, 3 yr old, Miles. Andrew took him under his wing. Andrew was a surrogate dad for Miles. They truly loved each other. My daughters Laurie and Yvonne loved him too. He'd always come over when I'd be trying to get them to bed and wire them all up and then leave. He was a fun guy. I miss him dearly but I know he is a star up there just hanging out with the rest of the family!! He was a good man!

Carol Pons Hopkins - January 04, 2024 at 08:20 PM



“ Inez Thompson lit a candle in memory of Andrew MacNamara Pons



Inez Thompson - January 04, 2024 at 04:32 PM

BL

“ I enjoyed working with Andrew in “our wing” and learning from him as a new person to the field. I loved our conversations about scuba diving, horses, and coffee get togethers. I never met Marva but he always spoke about you with such love. An amazing friend who will be missed dearly. The good ones always go far too soon.

Brighton Laznovsky - January 04, 2024 at 12:57 PM



“ *A very lovely man to work for God bless his soul*



Sharon McClinton - January 04, 2024 at 11:53 AM



“ *Dear, sweet friend, rest in peace.*



Melissa Vencill - January 04, 2024 at 09:48 AM



“ *In 2002 I traveled to Perth, Australia to compete in the Grand Masters Lacrosse World Games. I knew Andy from Sunday pick up lacrosse games in Jarettsville and his playing on several teams in tournaments. When we arrived at the Perth Airport Andy asked me if I could use a ride as he had a rental car. It was a very kind gesture and I accepted. The driving on the wrong side of the road was challenging and he kept running over the curb on my side of the car. He kept apologizing but I never said a word but his passing reminded me what a kind soul he was.*

Marty Applegate - January 03, 2024 at 07:16 PM