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A man of big dreams and style

Kevin Coupal of Waterloo

Born: Sept. 27, 1960 in Timmins

Died: March 22, 2010 heart failure

BY VALERIE HILL, RECORD STAFF

WATERLOO — Diana Coupal can still feel the essence of her husband Kevin's love surrounding the couple's Waterloo home, though the laughter has disappeared.

"One son lives with me and that's a blessing," Diana said. "Another son is in London, in medical science. They want to be there for their mom. My biggest blessing is to have two great sons."

The boys, Tyler and Ryan, seem a lot like their dad: caring and deeply devoted to family. And that family stretches beyond blood relatives.

Kevin owned Capri Salon and Spa in Waterloo, a family business started by his uncle Orval in 1957 and five years later joined by his father, Claude, an international champion stylist. Kevin took over in 2000 and before the ink could dry on the new contract, Claude had a stroke then died within three months. Devastated, Kevin told a Record reporter, "He was just a genuinely wonderful guy. He loved what he did and cared a lot for his clients and the community. He was the kindest, most giving guy you'd ever want to meet."

Like father, like son.

After Claude's death, Kevin continued with plans to renovate and expand the salon, in keeping with a tradition of service that over the years garnered devotion from clients and staff.

The often-quoted Kevin explained, "The staff are an extension of my family. I treat them the same way my father and uncle treated me because it worked for me. If I take care of my staff, they'll take care of the clients."

Kevin's grandfather, a blacksmith in Timmins, had been shocked to learn his two sons wanted to be hairstylists. As Kevin said, "My grandfather just couldn't get his head around it."

The Coupal brothers followed their dreams and after completing training, they followed their sister Jackie Yorke to Waterloo where they set the standard for style in those early years when there were few trendy salons available for women.

In the 1980s, Orval and Claude also opened a stylist training academy at the salon. Kevin, who received basic training in a now-defunct school in the region, began working at Capri in 1978 and, like the older Coupals, he also focused on educating other stylists. Throughout the 1980s and continuing until 2003, Kevin taught stylists at workshops, seminars and trade shows around the world, representing Clairrol and later Matrix. Diana said her husband excelled in his field though by the early 2000s, he was ready to stick closer to home where he then became one of a dozen top stylist team members for Wella Canada.

"He would travel and teach and provide classes for industry professionals," said salon manager Monica McKinley. "It was important to him to have a connection to the industry."

Monica recalls the stress Kevin placed on himself when he took over the salon in 2000. "He had some really big dreams and visions for the business," she said. "He was involved in every detail (of the renovation). That was Kevin; he wanted to have his fingers and his heart in all the changes." Monica also noted Kevin's heart was also in the direct client contact, the craft of styling, and not so much running the business, which is why he turned over most of the day-to-day operation to her. Diana, a high school business teacher, did the salon's accounting and payroll. The salon will continue to operate under the direction of these two women.

Monica said the loss of Kevin was devastating to staff. "In his Christmas card last year, he addressed it to his other family," she said. "We felt the same about him."

She described Kevin as "very kind, very caring and compassionate. He was funny and had a way of lightening up serious situations. He was a teaser but in a fun way. He was very charismatic. There was a wonderful energy about him."

Diana met Kevin in high school, then married him 26 years ago. "We had a beautiful marriage, we laughed so much and we travelled a lot. We did everything together."

Kevin was also generous. As a sideline, he supported various causes: raising thousands of dollars for charity as well as helping women undergoing cancer treatment feel better about themselves.

Diana said her husband was devoted as a father, never missing an important event in their sons' lives.

Tyler recalled his father's continued support, his pride in every accomplishment. "No matter the significance, he would ensure that I knew how proud he was of me. . . . He would always make me feel like I was on top of the world, even when I surely knew that I was not."

Ryan added, "He always tried his best to make us happy."

To Kevin, harmony in family and business was paramount. He loved to sing karaoke, play golf and cook for his family and friends. He just wanted to be surrounded by everyone he loved and who loved him, but at age 49, three years after bypass surgery, Kevin died unexpectedly in his sleep.



Family photo
Kevin Coupal



Record file photo
Kevin Coupal works with his salon co-ordinator
Monika McKinley in this 2007 file photo.



Record file photo
Kevin Coupal works with his salon co-ordinator
Monika McKinley in this 2007 file photo.

"Now there is that sense of walking alone," Diana said. "I never had that before. He was the best husband."

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