



Captain Donald Leach

APR 15, 1933 - OCT 2, 2020



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Captain Donald Leach

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Captain Donald Leach, 87, of Lakeland, Florida, formerly of St. Clair, Michigan passed away on October 2, 2020. Donald was born on April 15, 1933, in St. Clair to the late Bruce and Leonna Leach. Donald attended St. Clair schools for the entirety of his education and it was here that his natural athletic ability was discovered. Most notably his accomplishments were on the basketball court including scoring an astounding 56 points in one game, which earned him an induction to the St. Clair High School sports hall of fame, playing on the United States Army basketball team, and multiple games against the Harlem Globetrotters. Donald began his career in 1959, spanning nearly 40 years, sailing with the Interlake Steamship Company. He worked his way from deckhand to Captain throughout this impressive career in which he sailed on every boat the company owned and retired the William J. Delancy, now known as the Paul R. Tregurtha. Donald spent his last 5 years with the company as Captain on the Mesabi Miner. Sports and sailing were perhaps the first loves of his life. He married Sally Lee in April of 1964 and remained married to her for 56 years until his death. Through this union, he became the most remarkable stepfather to two children, Michele and Michael.

Don was an avid sports fan in addition to being an athlete. It is perhaps the lifelong sports conditioning that gave Don the endurance and self-discipline to fight a heart condition that had plagued him for over 20 years. He loved playing cards, walking, swimming, especially with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, music, and dancing. The love he had for his family was the greatest attribute not only to his life but to those whom it had an everlasting impact on. He more than earned the name “Papa” from the three loves of his life, his grandchildren, Nicholas, Makenzie, and Michael. The love and lessons given to his grandchildren will be carried with them for a lifetime.



Obituary

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He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Sally Leach, his children Michele Malane-Rutherford, Michael (Pam) Malane, and three grandchildren, Nicholas (Jennifer) Rutherford, Makenzie (Jim) Jurzysta, and Michael (Terri) Malane. He was blessed with 2 great-grandchildren, Riley and Reese. He is preceded in death by his parents Bruce and Leonna Leach, his brother, Robert Leach, and his in-laws Sherwood and Gladys Lee.

A memorial service to honor his life will be held at a later date in his hometown of St. Clair, Michigan.




Events

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Cemetery Details

 Cremation



Tribute Wall

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JL

Jimmy Lee posted:

Sure are gonna miss Uncle Don. He was always ready for a conversation about your wellbeing and finances. Lol. Rest in peace

October 16 at 5:07 AM

AM

Abby Mullendore posted:

Don was a sweet man with a big smile. Since I am a hairdresser, he was always asking me about products or new ways to grow his hair....we had a lot of laughs with that. Don will be missed by many. My sincere condolences to the entire family. RIP Don XO. Love Abby, Bud, Jessica, and Kerri

October 14 at 10:23 AM

GR

Gordon Rice posted:

My sincere condolences to the Donald Leach Family. Donald and I were roommates on the John Sherwin during the fall of 1964. He a Deckwatch and I as a newly Deckhand. He then, had a multitude of sea stories and sort of took me under his wing for the purpose of gaining my sea legs. It was quite evident at the time, he was on a mission to become a career Seaman. It's an honor for sure for me to be able to say I worked with Captain Donald Leach fifty six years ago. Again my condolences to the Leach Family.

October 12 at 6:10 AM

WC

William M Cox October 10 at 7:00 PM

RIP Captain 🙏 it was an honor to sail under you as Captain and 1st Mate for the ISS Company.

DS

David E. Sexton October 19 at 10:32 PM

I wished I could've got to know more about you being a Captain with all your experience and interesting stories. However I had one conversations when playing Basketball. You always had a smile that would light up the room. I loved that laugh like St.Nick. I will remember you forever. May you RIP my dear friend until we meet again. 🙌❤️

HK

Harry Krause posted:

Rest in peace. Harry Krause

October 11 at 3:12 PM



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GR

George Rydberg posted:

Sally, sorry to hear about Don. I have a lot of good memories from the sailing days. Back in '73 when he was second mate he would come back for supper after relieving the 4-8 watch and we would sit and B.S. about everything, but usually sports of course. When I was with him on the Miner some of the young guys didn't know how well he could shoot a basketball and they thought he was an easy win until they played him and got smoked. He was a good guy to sail with. Condolences Sally and family. George Rydberg

October 11 at 12:24 PM

NW

Nancy Leach Wasyk posted:

Uncle Don, I will miss you dearly. Especially our monthly talks, laughing about old family memories to your wisdom and advice. You will always hold a very special place in my heart. Love you forever, Your niece Nancy Leach Wasyk

October 11 at 8:55 AM

JB

Jackie Mayhew Berg lit a candle in honor of Captain Donald.

Sorry for your loss, sending prayers and hugs to Sally Ann, Mike, Michele and families 🙏

October 11 at 4:39 AM



AP

Anthony Ponceti posted:

Captain Don Leach's wife passed last year at Lakeland Regional Hospital. I was there with my friend Don. Anthony Ponceti.

October 10 at 3:47 PM



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WK

Wendy Westrick Kivel posted:

Dear Sally Ann, I have so many very fond memories of you and Don. He was such a truly nice guy! Hopefully he's meeting up with my dad and sharing stories in Heaven. I will keep you in my thoughts and prayers. Love, Wendy

October 10 at 1:44 PM

BG

Beth Griffor October 10 at 5:00 PM

Hello Sally Ann and family, Don was a very sweet man and I always enjoyed talking with him. Hope he gets a chance to reunite with Slim too. Take care ❤️ Beth Westrick Griffor

JW

Joann Westrick Wiersma posted:

Don was such a sweet, full of life friendly man. He certainly left his mark on everyone who met him including myself. RIP Don 💜

October 10 at 9:49 AM

MD

Maurice Dionne posted:

Being a neighbor and friend, I always looked forward to his stops during his daily walks by my home. He sat with me in my garage wood craft shop to talk about his sailing days and his many experiences. I served in the Coast Guard and we compared our "Sea stories" with many laughs about happenings during our service which at that time was nothing to laugh about. I will miss him. May he "Stay the course" in heaven's waters. Moe Dionne

October 10 at 9:34 AM

MR

Mary Rushlow October 10 at 3:10 PM

To Don's dear family, yiu list a real gem! Steve and I will miss our 'Captain Don' dearly. We are Sandpiper neighbours and Canadian snowbirds. Don was like a father to us when we were south. We had him over for meals, took him to pit luck Thursdays and went out the odd time. We swam together and had many talks about politics both north and south of the border. He would come over when my parents visited, met 2 of my daughters and their spouses and our grandson, also our 2 Golden Retrievers Steve would help him fix things around the house, or paint his driveway while Don and I chatted about sea tales and family. We would look at all his photo albums. He loved Sally, his children and grandkids so much. His pride showed through in all his stories. We never had the pleasure to meet Sally , my mother went through her illness and we lost her Oct 2018. I was her caregiver and I know that Michelle is a saint. Until we meet again at the pearly gates, goodbye our dear friend. Love you Steve and Mary Rushlow



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HI

Harles And Pat Irwin posted:

Our sincere sympathy to the entire Leach family. We both have fond memories of playing euchre with Don and his wife at Sandpiper. Capt., you will be missed! Charles and Pat Irwin

October 10 at 9:29 AM

MM

Michele Malane posted:

Poppy, I will miss you until I join you in heaven. You were a rock to me, a mentor, and a source of reason. There are no words to say that explain the heartache I have. Your daughter, Michele.

October 10 at 6:48 AM

DB

Doerte Blake posted:

My deepest condolences to Captain Don's family. I had the honor of being his Dance teacher for over 13 years. His will to always do his best was inspiring. He became a friend to our family and we will miss him. Sincerely, Dörte, Mike and Liam Blake

October 7 at 6:15 PM

MG

Mary Gettig October 10 at 12:37 PM

He was a good friend and neighbor in our community. We will miss your smile.

DB

Debbie Brockmann October 10 at 9:57 AM

I will certainly miss your friendly smile and carefree ways...We go back ever since you moved here, played cards, took trips and and enjoyed our pool together...It won't be the same without you...

MJ

Makenzie Jurzysta October 8 at 4:42 AM

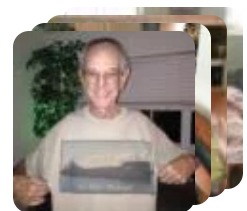
You had a special place in his heart. Thank you for all of the time you spent teaching him. He treasured that time.

JR

Jennifer Rutherford shared 5 photos to the **Tribute Wall** album.

We will miss him so much! Always smiling and story telling. We love you Grandpa Don!

October 6 at 5:44 PM





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DS

David E. Sexton And Rose H. Sexton posted:

You will be sadly missed by so many family and friends that love you. Don may you R.I.P.

October 6 at 8:05 PM

CS

Carol S Lee posted:

Much sympathy and love to Donald's family and friends. He was a very intelligent and kind man. I am so proud to have been a part of his family.

October 6 at 5:44 PM



Media

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Jennifer Rutherford shared 5 photos to the **Tribute Wall** album.

October 7 at 7:00 AM

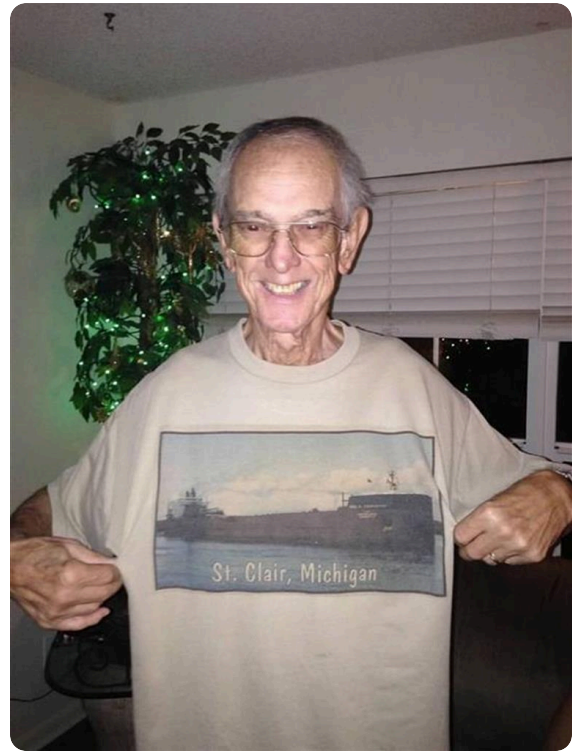




Media

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Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Captain Donald by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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