



Donald Saunders Leak

May 22, 1930 - June 24, 2024

It is with great sadness that we share the passing of our beloved father, Donald S. Leak, who left us on June 24, 2024, at the age of 94.

Dad was a lifelong learner. He was born in Hamburg, NY, in 1930 and began his education in a two-room schoolhouse in Farmdale, NJ. He continued his formal education as a high school graduate in Pompton Lakes and earned a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Stevens Institute. His love of history and nature fueled his many interests during and after his working years.

During the Korean War, he served his country in the Army Transportation Corp, testing railroad equipment in Fort Churchill on Hudson Bay, Canada, and Fort Eustis, VA. After an honorable discharge, he was hired as a test engineer by the Bendix Corporation in Teterboro, NJ, where he worked for 44 years and reached the position of Director of Operations for the Guidance

Systems Division. There he focused on the Apollo moon missions with determination and pride.

Don is survived by his beloved wife of 44 years, Elaine; his son, Donald Mark Leak, with his

wife, Joan; two grandchildren, Heather Cardone and Christie Reneer; five great-grandchildren; a

daughter, Susan Blanche Cugno, and husband Rick; and grandson, Derek Wiesing. Quiet and

mild-mannered, he cherished his family and shared his love of nature and reading with them all.

Among his siblings, he is survived by his loving "big sister" Audrey in Cave Creek, AZ, and

brother William with his wife Shirley in Barrington, NH. Another brother, Arthur, died as a young

man.

Don was an avid birder with a particular passion for the birds of North America - from the

Northeast to Florida. He knew the hawks, owls, songbirds, hummingbirds, and wading birds by

ear and eye. He was past president of the Fyke Nature Association and volunteered for many

years at the Hawk Watch on Mount Peter, NY, and the Celery Farm in Allendale, NJ. He

enjoyed participating in the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count--one of the world's oldest

and longest-running citizen science projects. He enjoyed boating, fishing, photography, wood

carving, traveling the world, and researching his family history. Always the engineer, Don did his

own work from car repairs to yard to home. He loved the forests, the shore,

and the swamps.

He lived a full life and continued his independence with all that he loved - even shoveling snow and raking leaves until quite recently.

Never will the sighting of a bird, the casting for striped bass, or a hike in the woods take place

by anyone who loved him without feeling his legacy. Dad, you will always reside in the hearts of each of us who loved you.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Donald's name to the Fyke Nature Club (<https://www.fykenature.org/join.php>) or The NJ Audubon Organization (<https://njudubon.org/ways-to-give/>) would be kindly appreciated by his family.

Cemetery Details

St. Michael's Cemetery

120 Saddle River Avenue
South Hackensack, NJ 07606

Previous Events

Burial

JUN **29**. 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Michael's Cemetery
120 Saddle River Avenue
South Hackensack, NJ 07606

Tribute Wall

WL

“ Our family warmly remember 'Uncle Don' as a prankster. He had a technique for getting fussy kids to eat, but he was so quiet and nice that he got away with sticking that spoonful in. His brother remembers Don and his college friends sticking his hand in a bowl of warm water when he was sleeping, but he heard them and grabbed the bowl and tossed it over them! In recent years he would send pictures of trees for his brother to identify problems.
Good memories from a long lifetime.

William and Shirley Leak - June 29, 2024 at 12:07 PM

SC

*That sounds just like him! He always talked fondly about his "little brother" who knew everything about trees, and he enjoyed his visits with you both throughout the years.
Thank you for sharing!!
With love,
Sue (Leak) Cugno*

Sue Cugno - July 03, 2024 at 02:30 PM