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Raymond J. Brooks, 78

Photos



Raymond Brooks

The Holland Sentinel
Posted Sep 15, 2008 @ 05:45 PM

Holland, MI — Raymond J. Brooks died September 12, 2008, with his loving and devoted wife and children by his side. His family wishes to thank the doctors and nurses of the M.D. Anderson Medical Center, Holland Hospital, Holland Hematology Clinic, and the critical care unit of Spectrum Health for their outstanding compassion and excellent skills in caring for Ray. Ray was born in Detroit on October 29, 1929 as the son of Herman Joseph and Martha Leona Brooks. He is a descendent of a long line of sailing and steam ship captains from Detroit and Anchorville, whose families first settled in Michigan in the summer of 1700 from Quebec, Canada.

Born the day of the Great Stock Market Crash, otherwise known as Black Tuesday, he was a proud member of the Depression-era. As a child, his family lived in Detroit where his father practiced law, worked at the Wayne County tax-authority, and was treasurer of an automotive company. Ray attended Catholic schools throughout his childhood and graduated from Cooley High School where he ran track and played on the golf team. Ray graduated from the University of Detroit and Lawrence Institute of Technology with degrees in Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, and attended graduate school at the University of Michigan.

As a young boy in Detroit, Ray fell in love with flying. He would watch mail planes fly over his home and dreamed of being a pilot. To pursue and achieve his dream, he joined the U.S. Navy as a cadet and then the newly formed U.S. Air Force. He was a member of an early Air Force flight school class, 53A.

Ray treasured being an accomplished fighter pilot, and especially prized the F-86 Sabre Jet. His career in aviation included Graduate and Flight Instructor of the elite Nellis AFB Fighter War School, the Squadron Commander of the 171st Tactical Fighter Squadron, the Director of Operations of the 127th Fighter Group, and Flight Commander of the 107th Red Devils Fighter Squadron at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, and a pilot in the 49th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron at Dow Air Force Based in Bangor, Maine.

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He retired as Lieutenant Colonel of the U.S. Air Force and the Michigan Air National Guard. Later in his aviation career, he was a corporate pilot for General Motors Corporation. Ray started his commercial flying career with United Airlines in 1964. Ray retired from United Airlines in 1989 as a Captain who flew the 747, 737, 727, DC-8, DC-10, DC-7, DC-6, and Viscount. In recent years he cherished flying a restored Harvard T-6 with his life-long friends. Ray was first diagnosed with lymphoma in 1984 and, despite a dire prognosis of six weeks to live, he fought the disease into remission with treatment from the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. Ray was cancer-free for 20 years before the cancer came back. Once again he overcame it with aggressive treatment using the same team of doctors who had followed him closely for the past 20 years. Ray spoke the praises of M.D. Anderson, and used his experience to guide and advise others diagnosed with cancer from United Airlines, the M.D. Anderson volunteer cancer support network as well as through his work as

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a Stephen's Minister at St. Francis De Sales Catholic Church. He encouraged others to seek the best treatment available to them and to never give up their fight.

At all times Ray vigorously pursued and cherished life. He lived it to the fullest. Never to turn away an opportunity to pursue an adventure, he loved to sail, fly, soar and travel the world. This enthusiasm was displayed through his enjoyment in sailing many competitive races in Florida and Michigan, including six Chicago-to-Mackinac sailing races. For more than 40 years, he and his family have been members of the Macatawa Bay Yacht Club, where Ray enjoyed the camaraderie of other sailors. He also loved sharing his enthusiasm for life and adventure through his gift of storytelling to family and friends.

Ray traveled all over the world with his family and was always looking forward to the next trip. He and Anita raised their children in Holland, Michigan, and later shared their time between Holland and Marco Island, Florida. Ray taught his children the beauty and diversity of the world by taking each child as well as the entire family on many trips across the globe. Ray and Anita often traveled to air force reunions, air shows, and loved visiting their children and grandchildren all over the country.


Ray was a devoted husband, father, brother, and most of all, dear friend to many. Ray was the loving husband of 45 years to Anita Theresa Brooks. He was the caring and nurturing father to Raymond J. Brooks, Jr. and his wife Nicole, Julie Brooks, Jennifer Brooks Mason and her husband Greg, and Renee Frederiksen and her husband David. He dearly loved and adored his grandchildren who are Clay Brooks, Caroline, Rosemary and John Frederiksen, and Cecelia and Sophia Mason. His siblings are Jacqueline Brooks (deceased), Murray Brooks, and Shirley Brooks, all of Detroit.

Most recently he was an active volunteer at Evergreen Commons where he enjoyed his every contact with fellow seniors. Funeral Mass will be 11:00 a.m. Friday September 19, 2008 at St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church, 195 West 13th Street Holland, MI. with The Rev. Charles Brown officiating.

Visiting will be from 2-4 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. Thursday at The Mulder Chapel, Dykstra Life Story Funeral Home, 188 West 32nd Street, Holland.

Please visit www.lifestorynet.com to sign Raymond's online registry, share a photo, or read his life story.

The Brooks family asks that donations be made in lieu of flowers to The Raymond J. Brooks Memorial Fund at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, P.O. Box 4486, Houston, Texas, 77210-4486.

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