

Frank Loper Helme



Alplaus, NY. Frank Loper Helme died peacefully on Saturday evening, September 22, after a long siege with Alzheimer's. He was 80 years old. A resident of Alplaus near Schenectady, NY, he was born in Port Jefferson, Long Island on September 10, 1932 to Mildred Loper Helme and Frank Stubert Helme. After graduating from high school in Port Jefferson, Frank went to Princeton University. There he joined the Cloister Inn Dining Club and was on Princeton Crew and the Rifle Team. He received his bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering in June 1954, graduating with honors. After graduation, he was on active duty in the Army until 1957. He was responsible for a radar installation and worked with a team to train radar technicians. A highlight of those years was a three week jaunt around Europe with free airplane flights for being in uniform. After two years he was transferred to the Army Reserve for the remainder of his eight-year commitment. He was honorably discharged in 1963.

After active duty, Frank gained employment at KAPL, Knolls Atomic Power Lab. He attended RPI while at KAPL and was awarded a master of science degree in mechanical engineering in January 1960. In 1975 Frank undertook and completed training in the KAPL Nuclear Power Engineering School. He became a nuclear plant shutdown director responsible for developing procedures and overseeing the shutdown of nuclear submarine power plants. After a number of other positions at KAPL, he retired in 1994 after 37 years.

After retirement Frank took a new direction, installing up a complete pottery studio in the basement and concentrating on making pots. Having taken courses for years, he soon became fascinated with developing glazes. A number of fine pieces he made are treasured by family and friends.

Travel also became a focus during the active retirement years. Hiking in Peru and New Zealand, kayaking in the Bahamas and the Pacific Northwest, safari in Kenya and Tanzania, were some of the high points.

Boats were a big part of Frank's life. As a youngster he sailed on Long Island Sound, and built and raced a small motor boat. As an adult he had a motor yacht on Lake George for many years and enjoyed fishing and camping on the islands. In the 1980s, returning to sailing, Frank joined the Saratoga Lake Sailing Club. He raced a Kestrel with wife, Ruth, as crew and was active in the Kestrel fleet. He also enjoyed canoeing and kayaking. With Ruth and friends, he undertook numerous paddling and camping trips. He also had a number of BMW motorcycles and old Porsche sports cars over the years and regularly rode his motorcycle to KAPL.

Frank was a spiritual questioner and seeker. He found a spiritual path, Eckankar, which answered his questions. He was very active in the regional group, acting as treasurer and then area director for a number of years.

Frank is survived by his wife, Ruth Bonn, whom he married in 1988. She resides in Alplaus. He was previously married to Marcia Phillips Helme. Their son, Steven Phillips Helme, born in 1963, now resides in Seattle. His two children, Alexandra, 16, and Nathan, 11, also live in Seattle, with their mother, Jane Higgins. Two stepsons survive Frank as well: JP (John Paul) Bonn, now living in Edinburgh, Scotland, and Gregory Bonn, who lives in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

A memorial service will be held at the Glenville Funeral Home, 9 Glenridge Road, Glenville, NY on Tuesday, September 25 at six o'clock. Donations to the Alzheimer's Association , Northeastern NY Chapter, PO Box 96011, Washington, DC 20090-6011 may be made in lieu of flowers.

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