



# Donald James Norton

MAY 20, 1932 - MAY 24, 2020



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## **Donald James Norton**

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**D**onald James Norton was born in Olean, NY on May 20, 1932. He served in the U.S. Navy, built a cabin, wrote three books and helped his beloved wife Jean raise seven children.

Don and Eugenia Marie (Jean) Mokski were married on June 29, 1957 in Our Lady of Victory Basilica, Lackawanna, NY. Jean died of lung cancer on March 8, 2008.

His parents, Ivers and Ailene (Eaton) Norton, his son Donnie, his sister, Diana and brother Paul preceded him in death. He's survived by daughters Susan, Ann and Catherine; sons Jack, Eric and Lawrence; siblings Gloria Fant, Thomas and Ivers, and his cherished companion, Janice T. Schermerhorn of Timonium, MD, and grandchildren Tess Norton, Ricky Norton, Benjamin and Joseph Henley, Adele and Emil Norton.

Norton was graduated from Olean, NY High School in 1950 and received a bachelor's degree in English from Canisius College in Buffalo. At Canisius he wrote poetry for the Quadrangle and reviewed books for the Buffalo Courier-Express.

He wrote Larry, a biography of aviation pioneer Lawrence D. Bell, (Nelson-Hall, Chicago, 1982); a short biography, Honey, It's Great, about a marvelous man named J. Frank Robinson, (Artex Co., Florida, 2000), and Chippewa Chief in World War II (McFarland, North Carolina, 2001), the story of a Chippewa Indian named Oliver Rasmussen who eluded captivity for 68 days after his Navy bomber was downed in Hokkaido in World War II. When the war ended Rasmussen was the only American fighting man in Japan who wasn't a prisoner of war.

Vacations were a problem with their large family, so Don, Jean, 11-year-old Jack and the children, built a cabin south of Buffalo and spent the next 10 years weekendening and vacationing there. (An article about the cabin-building project was published in the January 1969 Popular Science.)



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Norton performed in minor roles in various theatrical productions with his brother, Paul, at the Milton Theatre and at Possum Point Playhouse in Georgetown, Delaware. He also performed with the Ad Hoc Touring Radio Company; recreating old radio shows such as Fibber McGee & Molly for a dwindling number of elderly audiences who remembered old time radio.

He served as president of the Buffalo Chapter, Public Relations Society of America and president of U.S. Navy Squadrons 33 Association (former Navy pilots and crews). He wrote the association's quarterly Bulletin for many years.

Don enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1951 and served four years operating radar with Night Attack Squadron VC-33, based in Pomona, NJ. Sea duty included a six-month Mediterranean cruise aboard the USS Coral Sea in 1952 and the world cruise of the USS Tarawa in 1953-54.

After navy service, jobs included crankshaft polish grinder at Chevrolet's Tonawanda, NY, engine plant; signal tower operator, New York Central Railroad; editor of the Amherst, NY, Bee; reporter for the Medina, NY, Journal-Register; reporter for the New Haven, CT, Register; labor reporter for the Buffalo Courier-Express; news bureau manager for Bell Aerospace Textron and Cornell Aeronautical Lab; news bureau manager for RCA Government Systems Division and GE Aerospace.

In 2004 Norton received a \$5000 fellowship grant from the Delaware Division of the Arts for his work in creative nonfiction. He was a member of the Newspaper Guild, United Auto Workers Local 774 (AFL-CIO), the Order of Railroad Telegraphers (AFL), and the Public Relations Society of America.

His family and friends will miss Don, but they will cherish the time they spent together. His spirit lives on forever and he will join our mom/Jean in heaven.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all services will be private. Arrangements are being handled by Parsell Funeral Homes and Crematorium, Atkins-Lodge Chapel, Lewes, DE.

Please sign the online guestbook located on the tribute page.



## Tribute Wall

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BC

**Bob Clements** posted:

Just learned if Don's passing. What a great, vital, fun, kind and loyal gentleman! Elva loved you so much, good man. Hope to see you, and her, some day on the other side

December 4 at 3:57 AM

CH

**Charlene Hubert** lit a candle in honor of Donald.



May 29 at 1:36 AM

CH

**Charlene Hubert** May 29 at 1:48 AM

I had the pleasure of working with Don a little over 20 years ago at CHEER in Georgetown, DE. Matter of fact, our desks were next to each other. His creative way of writing and his sense of humor, truly added to a great day at work. So sorry to learn of his passing. I feel fortunate that our paths crossed so many years ago. He was truly a joy to be around!

DM

**Donna L. Smith-Moore** lit a candle in honor of Donald.



May 28 at 5:01 PM

DM

**Donna L. Smith-Moore** posted:

I had the good fortune of working with Don a little over 20 years ago, during one of his "retirement jobs"- as the Public Relations specialist at Sussex County Senior Services, CHEER in Georgetown, Delaware. I was the Marketing Director at that time and as soon as i met Don I knew he would be perfect for the part-time Public Relations position.He was a joy to know and work with and we had a lot of fun writing press releases and putting together the agency newsletter.Don was a kind, intelligent gentleman with a great sense of humor and I am blessed to have known him.Donna Smith-Moore

May 28 at 5:00 PM



# Memories only last if you share them

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



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