



Donald N. Heltenen

July 4, 1923 - August 16, 2017

Donald Nils Heltenen of Grand Ledge, Michigan, passed away on August 16, 2017, at the age of 94. He was born July 4, 1923 to the late Fred and Helmi (Huru) Heltenen in Lansing.

Don was a WWII U.S. Army Sergeant. As a severely wounded Purple Heart recipient who, like many of his generation, went on to achieve his personal goals, Don proudly counseled and encouraged disabled Vietnam Veterans. He graduated from GM Institute as an industrial engineer and retired from Lansing GM plants after 30 years. He attended Wacousta Community United Methodist Church and was a member of the Wacousta-DeWitt Masonic Lodge. Don was proud of his Finnish and Upper Peninsula heritage. He loved the outdoors, ice fishing, and hunting. He applied his love for tools and machines to an excavation business and workshop in his barn. Determined to build and fix his own things, he was skilled in many trades and a master tinker with a reputation for having hard to find tools and parts. His buddies joked about all the stuff he collected. Others joked about his insatiable love for ice cream, chocolate, and peanut butter.

Many remember Don and his wife Shirley, who he dearly loved, as long-standing central figures in the Wacousta community, social, generous, with a true gift for helping others.

Don is survived by his daughters, Janet (Bill) Hanson, Karen (Mike) Milligan and Ruth Ann (Frank) Soave; son, Fred Heltenen (Geradine); grandchildren, Lauren (Lee) Gramling, Jennifer Soave, Nick Hanson, Annika Hanson, Mark

Hanson and Ian Milligan; great-grandchildren, Brennan and Millie Gramling and sister, Greta Sinko, as well as, many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his wife, Shirley, and sister, Doris Wisehart.

A military graveside service will be held on Tuesday, August 22, 2017, 11:00 a.m. at the Wacousta Cemetery in Watertown Township. Arrangements by Holihan-Atkin-Barclay Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Grand Ledge. Memorial contributions may be given to the Disabled American Veterans Memorial Program, P.O. Box 14301, Cincinnati, Ohio 45250 or Great Lakes Caring Hospice Foundation, 900 Cooper Street, Jackson, Michigan 49202.

Cemetery Details

Wacousta Cemetery

13500 Wacousta Road
Grand Ledge, MI 48837

Previous Events

Military Graveside Service

AUG 22. 11:00 AM (ET)

Wacousta Cemetery
13500 Wacousta Road
Grand Ledge, MI 48837

Tribute Wall

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“ Don was a friend of my father since their high school days at Central and Sexton. I remember when Don, Shirley and the other friends of the group that would get together with their spouses and families for a visit on occasions. They would share their memories of their circle of buddies that were always interesting and sometimes humorous. As a child I learned of some of the things they did and fun they must have had. Being involved in the war must have been a harrowing experience for them all, especially Don.

Our thoughts and prayers are with your family.

-George and Mary Schneeberger

George Schneeberger - August 22, 2017 at 08:46 AM