

Unfortunately Capt Bob passed away suddenly on May 13, 2014, Tuesday evening. Otherwise he had wanted to continue on as a member, he had told me last week, but got aspiration pneumonia and went to the hospital that week.

My dear Dad, Capt. Bob Massey came back home Monday night on Hospice, due to end stage kidney failure, bladder cancer, complicated with acute aspiration Pneumonia. Dad died unexpectedly soon because his kidneys shut down from cumulative previous damage, but he passed quite peaceably late Tuesday evening, on May 13, 2014 at 10:25 pm, after a very good morning with me. He comfortably died at home holding my hand, happy to be out of the hospital and finally home again with me. He had been in the hospital 9 days from aspiration pneumonia from his swallowing disorder problems, so he was so very happy to be back home.

His favorite Havana Brown cat, RW GPR Acapella Ming, sat vigil with Dad all through the day and stayed faithfully at guard after his death until the Funeral Home came to take Dad's body. Dad was 90 years old on his just past birthday Jan 27.

Capt. Bob was a distinguished lifetime Navy man, serving in WW2, Korea, and a host of other smaller skirmishes, volunteering right out of high school (tested out with a GDP in place of graduating), as first on board ship in the pipefitting department, and later served as one of the first elite Navy Underwater Demolition Team that was later renamed the Navy Seals. He retired from 20 years of active Navy duty as a Chief Petty Officer by October 24, 1960 but stayed in the Fleet Reserve for another 10 years, just missing the Vietnam war years.

Capt Bob worked for Western Electric Co in Winston-Salem, NC for four years laying transoceanic telephone cable lines to first connect true worldwide telephone communication from 1960-64. He moved his family to Alpena, MI where he had always come with his longtime hunting buddies to chase the whitetail deer, to attend Alpena Community College for his two year engineering degree. Graduating with honors, he became a Great Lakes ship Captain, on his own salvaged 129 ft tug/barge combined boat, the Massey D, forming the Massey Marine Salvage and Construction company to dive for cargo reclamation and building seawalls and harbors for many communities and businesses. He legally was awarded salvage rights to many of the famous wrecks in Lake Huron, including the Nordmeer, the Pewabic, the Monrovia, and others too numerous to mention. Many years after the initial salvage of the Nordmeer cargo (an enormous German freighter carrying steel rolls and bars that ran aground near Thunder Bay island), Capt Bob had the foresight to convince the US government to do the first and only environmental cleanup of an impending disaster in the making before it happened, by getting them to award a contract to clean up and remove the oil that was just beginning to leak from the Nordmeer's full oil tanks. There was reputedly enough oil on the Nordmeer to cover the entire surface of Lake Huron with a 1/8th-1/4 inch skim of oil. After more than 20 years in the marine salvage and construction business he passed on his business and boat to his son Mark to carry on. Capt Bob then went to Florida to teach Demolitions 101 to new students at Florida Institute of Technology-Jenson Beach branch for a number of year until his retirement in 1986. He was a lifetime 32nd degree Mason, first out of the Detroit Acacia lodge, and then transferred to the local Alpena lodge. He was an Elk in his later years, a lifetime member of Thunder Bay Island Lighthouse Society, a member of the Friends of Alpena County Pool group, ISMA, and the NRA.

Dad always lived a very full life, and although his recent diagnosis of bladder cancer was unable to be caught in time to fix, he did not give up hope and small joys of each day. Hospice helped us to set up a hospital bed facing his beloved big picture window out to the backyard which was his favorite place in all the world. He came home late Monday night, for what we expected and hoped would be several weeks to a few months of hospice care with me. It was not to be though.

On Tuesday morning he was bright and alert, happily ate a good breakfast of his very favorite homemade Belgium waffles with fresh strawberries, whipped cream and maple syrup and finally real coffee after so much bland hospital food. During breakfast, Capt. Bob enjoyed his view on the backyard, pointed out the black squirrel who was comically upside down raiding the corn in our bird feeder just outside his window, and said "squirrel" while laughing, which were possibly his last spoken words. His son David called in in the early afternoon to tell Dad he loved him, and I relayed son Mark's love to him too, which he acknowledged with his eyes, and struggled tried hard to speak but it was too difficult for him to do.

Last week at the hospital he was very alert so we talked many and long times sharing our love, and I recalled all his dear ones to him at that time, and especially we talked of the fun he had in Alaska, our canoe trips, His friends made through the years, and even the many fun trips to cat shows he attended with me over the past 12 years. I think his favorite part of any outing was going out to dinner at Red Lobster and other family restaurants on our trips, and the meetings you all did.

Although Dad came late to being around cats, being initially more of a dog lover, he and neutered HB cat Ming had an immediate and continuing bond. Even when Dad was in the Nursing Home the past year for rehab, I made sure to sneak his favorite cats in to see him in my "Incognito" cat carry bag.

He treasured all his friendships and loved all the fun times we all shared together. Thank you all so much for being friends and colleagues to my Dad, and I know Dad and I both fondly remembered his experiences with the ShipMasters.

Dad's funeral plan mandates direct cremation with no formal services as per his personal request. He wanted his ashes scattered somewhere among his home waters in Lake Huron. We will probably have a small memorial gathering and wake at the time of the scattering ceremony, once weather warms up and we can get someone to take us out on the Lake Huron for the ceremony.

I know that all Dad would wish was that you all think fondly of him, remember his love for life, and to live happily forward. He did not expect anyone to have to travel for the scattering of his ashes or do things to mark his passage from this earth other than to live in glad remembrance of his love and happier times together.

I will miss him always, and remember him in joy.

Sadly,
Candice Massey