

12/12/20 - Obit for Art written by his daughters:

On a cold winter day nearly 73 years ago, Arthur Robb Butler was born to Ralph Otis Butler, III (deceased) and Alice Mae Butler. In what can only be considered an homage to his beloved United States Coast Guard Academy Class (USCGA '72) he peacefully cast off for his eternal haven, 72 years and three hundred fifty plus days later.

The third of seven children, Art had a happy and busy childhood. He was an Eagle Scout, a Marysville High School graduate, a football player, and a devoted brother to all. After years of helping his father with milk deliveries and running a dairy, Art gained a lifetime love of ice cream rivaled only by his love of the sea. After two years at Michigan State University, Art heeded the siren's call to attend the Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut. "The Bear," as he was known there, played football, likely got in some escapades (which he kept hidden from his daughters), and woo'd the love his life, Carolyn Kay Fordham, from the Academy's hallowed halls. After a very public proposal to a very private person, Art somehow convinced the most beautiful and intelligent woman in the world to join in his adventures in 1972.

Their adventures took them from Michigan to Italy, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Maryland. Along the way their family grew by leaps and bounds: both literally with the births of "his girls" Kristin and Megan, and figuratively with the countless life-long friends, sons, and daughters he informally adopted. After twenty years of service, CDR Arthur Butler retired from the Coast Guard and moved to his home port of Plymouth, MI.

Over the past nearly three decades, Art has poured his life into his community and his family. He has served as President of the Rotary Club of Plymouth, on the board of Directors of the Plymouth United Way, as President of the Church Council at Risen Christ Lutheran Church, and as legal council for numerous other organizations that were near and dear to him. Art remained a practicing attorney in the State of Michigan until his illness. Art was also able to watch his family grow with the addition of five grandchildren and a son-in-law. He also informally adopted a few more daughters, and acted as favorite uncle to many nieces and nephews of multiple generations.

As is befitting of such a great man, Art's crew is large. His first mate and beautiful bride of 48 years, Carolyn Kay Butler, is left waving from the shore beside his daughters, Col Kristin KB McCall, USAF, Kristin's husband Lt Col Jonathan McCall, USAF, and their children Duncan Arthur, Áine Kay, and Meara Elizabeth, and Megan Marie Butler Schlanser, and her son Adam Rodney and daughter Jaclyn Read. Art is also survived by his mother, Alice Mae Rankin Butler, his brother Ralph Otis Butler IV and wife Elizabeth, his sister Barbara Lansing and husband Jack, sister Beverly Davis and husband Glenn, brother Brinton Butler, sister Lorraine Pillow, brother George Butler and wife Teri, his sister-in-law Barbara Troupos and husband Pete, and his sister-in-law Debra Behmlander and husband Daniel. His deckhands include 26 beloved nieces and nephews and nearly 40 great nieces and nephews. The second watch of crewmates left ashore includes, among others, his brothers in blue especially CDR Carl Smith, the cadets he adopted including CDR Mike Raber and his family, his exchange student, Staffan, his Midshipmen: Laura, Kelvin, Steve, Jack, and Amy; and his adopted daughters Megan Ivey and Kathryn Swan.

While many join us in grieving that he must make this part of his sea voyage alone, we rejoice that he is called home to stand watch by the ultimate Captain and our savior and is able to watch over us from above.

A service celebrating his life will be held at Risen Christ Lutheran Church on Wednesday, December 16, 2020 at 1 pm. Visitation will be held at Vermeulen Funeral Home on Monday from 6 pm to 9 pm, Tuesday from 1 pm to 4 pm and 6 pm to 9 pm. Final respects may also be paid at Risen Christ Lutheran Church from 12 pm to 1 pm. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the National Coast Guard Museum Association at www.coastguardmuseum.org or the Plymouth Rotary Foundation at P.O. Box 5401 Plymouth, MI 48170.