

Donald Earl Smethers

March 1, 1939 – December 27, 2020

Don was born in Portland, Oregon and passed away at Kaiser hospital from cardiovascular complications. We said goodbye to an extraordinary man who lived an amazing life of honesty, dedication, loyalty, faith, courage & helping others and above all, loving his family first.

He was preceded in death by father Ernest Earl Smethers, mother Karen Edith Smethers and survived by his wife Sonjia, Bob Smethers (son), Beverly Strange (daughter), Rian Gant (stepson), Nicole Schumacher (granddaughter), Kaitlyn Stone (granddaughter), Brittney Stone (granddaughter), Carly Smethers (granddaughter), Hudson Gant (step-grandson), June Gant (step-granddaughter), Greyson (great-grandson), Oliver (great-grandson), Archer (great-grandson), Orion (great-grandson), Nancy Burbach (sister) and Brenda Lehman (first wife).

Don's childhood stomping grounds were the St Johns and N. Portland neighborhoods where he often toured the area with his bicycle buddies. He recalled times spent as an early adolescent touring the devastation left behind when Vanport neighborhood was flooded in 1948. The resulting Victory Blvd area would eventually be developed into road race and drag racing facility which would later become Don's "adult playground" for several decades throughout the rest of his life.

Don graduated from Benson Polytechnic High School in 1956 with best friends Carl Raymond Benson and Elliott Herder. Don then attended college at Portland State. He and his high school buddy Ray joined the army in 1957. They served 2 years active duty at Fort Ord followed by 2 years active reserve back in Portland. While serving as a reservist, Don and Ray worked at Atiyeh Brothers doing installations & cleaning.

In 1961 Don married Brenda Procter and together they had son, Bob and daughter, Beverly 2 years later. In 1962 Don began a 3-month internship with Tektronix and was then hired full time. At the time, Don also worked part time at a convenience store and sold their first house to raise funds to purchase land and build the house on Germantown Road.

("How much dynamite DOES it take to clear stumps for an access road and accidentally blow up the kids' swing set?")

Don had experienced first-hand the post-war automobile boom prior to the 1950-60's. Throughout high school he always had an interest in owning and building "sports cars". A colleague Gary Wright from Tektronix purchased a Porsche 911 in 1966 and Don joined the racing team. The next year Don and Brenda travelled to the national road racing runoffs in Daytona, Florida to crew for the 911 Team. In 1968 another friend Chuck Clemens knew of a twin to his own car, a 1960 Porsche 356 Roadster. Both drivers raced the two matching Roadsters through 1972 when Don won his first Championships in Improved Production & Sports Racing classes.

Don applied his electronics expertise to his racing hobby by developing a revolutionary new lap timing system. It was customary for timing/scoring crews to use traditional swept-hand stop watches to simultaneously time 2-4 drivers a piece. Don designed a "Master" clock with 10 "Client" boxes which eliminated complexity and enhanced accuracy.

In the decades as hobbyist car owner/Team Principal with FASTCO Racing ("father and son team"), the drivers & crew earned over 40 club racing Championships competing on tracks throughout the Northwest & Canada. Don owned & race-prepared a total of 5 Porsche 911's between 1974 to 2002. In 1990 Don & son Bob developed a bare VW Golf chassis into a class winning competitor earning 14 Championships. Other exotic cars which Don owned throughout the years included 1955 Porsche 550

Spyder, 1969 Brabham BT21, 1966 McLaren MK 1B CAN-AM, 1981 TIGA CSR National Champion and 1983 TIGA Sports 2000.

Don's other interests & activities throughout the 1970's-80's included boating, water skiing, camping, fishing and snow skiing. It was at a Tektronix-hosted ski outing in 1980 when Don met Sonjia and her son Rian skiing Mt Bachelor. Don was employed with Tektronix for 27 years and in 1989 at age 50 retired to pursue other interests & activities. Don & Sonjia enjoyed watching off-road races supporting son Rian who was an active motocross competitor.

Don went on to build another home and a couple large garage/shop expansion projects. This was necessary to support another hobby owning collector cars and owning/operating 2 rental car businesses. Don & Sonjia enjoyed sailing and travelled to several exotic beaches worldwide. They were married on St John USVI and have been married 29 years.

As time progressed, Don enjoyed his continued participation with road racing clubs and voluntarily served as President, Race Chairman, Executive Board Representative, Timing/Scoring Chief, Webmaster, Treasurer and Steward/Deputy Executive Steward. Don also served as System Operator for the private water district serving 80 homes in their neighborhood. After turning over the routine daily/monthly responsibilities to son Bob, Don assumed duties as Bookkeeper.

Don & Sonjia were enthusiastic power boat owners and volunteered to host various activities at Portland Yacht Club. There was a sequence of power boats & slips which Don & Sonjia owned at Willamette and PYC. Their last yacht was a beautiful 44' Ocean Alexander. Don was intrigued with advanced radar and satellite navigation systems – truly a tech nerd! Don stayed active with a variety of car clubs, Porsche Club, Portland Yacht Club and enjoyed organizing reunions for the Benson Class of 56. Don also returned to the Masonic Lodge and Scottish Rite doing all the degrees!

As the twilight years approached, Don & Sonjia enjoyed watching Hudson and June play soccer and having tea parties with the grand-girls.

They loved researching the Wurlitzer organ local history since music was so much of their life. Here are some of Don's favorites: "Autumn Leaves" by Eric Clapton, "Hands On The Wheel" by Jerry Walker, "Stardust" by Willy Nelson, "My Sweet Lady" by John Denver, "This Is All I Ask" by Josh Groban & Tony Bennett, "Strangers In Paradise" by Andrea Bocelli and Tony Bennett, "If Tomorrow Never Comes" by Garth Brooks.

In lieu of flowers donations to Benson Polytechnic High School Alumni Association for scholarships. To donate to this fund please send your check to.....