



Ron Leatz

April 10, 1942 - April 28, 2019

Served Saint Joseph Charter Township Fire Department Station #1
In the late 1950's and 1960's.

Ronald "Ron" Leatz, 77, of Dowagiac passed away on Sunday, April 28, 2019, at his home.

Ron was a civic-minded person all his life. After graduating from high school in St. Joseph in 1960, Ron began his pursuit of becoming a firefighter by starting his education with Benton Harbor Community College & Technical Institute. Ron carried on the family tradition of barbershop singing and won a scholarship for music, but he decided instead to play the drums. He always enjoyed music. While in college, he met his future bride, Ann Schmidt of Dowagiac, and married her on Oct. 28, 1961.

A few years later Ron began a family and explored a variety of civic and firefighting jobs to include a WSJM radio sports announcer, a speedway fire suppression/safety team member for multiple speedway tracks in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio and California, and started his own fire extinguisher servicing company. He worked in fire suppression/extinguisher contracts for multiple companies and eventually became a DoD Civil Service firefighter at four different military bases. His greatest firefighting accomplishment was when he worked for Northrop Grumman Corp in California as a Dept. Chief, fire inspector and quality assurance technician.

After suffering a near fatal accident in May 1989, Ron had to focus on recovery from his injuries and retired from Northrop. He entered consulting and began selling fire apparatus and equipment. Since he had more time at home, Ron also spent a significant amount of time contributing to the local city council in California and led a number of professional organizations related to barbershop, classic cars and antique motorized fire apparatus. When Ron and Ann moved back to Michigan in 2005, he was still advocating for community projects and began a four-year endeavor to secure lights for the Dowagiac Train Depot. Always a lover of classic cars, he also bought his first Checker Marathon (like the cab, only grey) and revitalized the Checker Car Club of America as its president.

Ron is preceded in death by his father, Ray, and his mother, Margaret (Totzke).

Ron is survived by his wife, Ann; and four children: Julie A. Morning of Twentynine Palms, Calif., Stephen C. Leatz of Canyon Lake, Calif., Donna C. Koprek of Kalamazoo and Roann R. Leatz of Harrisburg, Penn. He also has six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. His only sibling, Barb Place, resides in Lawton, Mich.

A reception will be held from 6-8 p.m. on Friday, May 3, at Clark Chapel Funeral Home, 405 Center St. Dowagiac, MI 49047. Flowers may be sent to 402 Main St., Dowagiac, MI 49047. Those wishing to leave a condolence online may do so at www.clarkch.com