



Vernon William Centerbar

1940 - 2020

Milton - Vernon William Centerbar of Milton, VT/Lakeland, FL earned his wings on the morning of June 4, 2020 at the McClure Respite House after a short but brave battle with Mesothelioma, his loving family at his side as he transitioned into the next life. Born on November 7, 1940, the only son of Harold C. Centerbar and his wife Bertha Louise (Shepard).

A 1960 graduate of Burlington High School he joined the US Navy shortly after as a cook and refrigeration/AC specialist. He served aboard the USS Boston and the USS Macon during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Shortly after coming out of the Navy he married

Patricia "Joyce" Benoit (Rowley). Vernon worked most of his life in the automotive industry working beside his uncles at Jim's Auto Body in So. Burlington for 17 years before moving to Gulfport, MS and managing the Autobody Department of Watkins Oldsmobile. Upon returning to VT in the early 1990's he continued to work in the auto body industry, the last business being Runway Auto. In the early years he did auto body work at home in the garage in Milton and for Bobby Dragon on his race cars at their shop. After retirement he drove school buses in Spring Hill, FL and tour buses for Premier Coach out of Milton, VT. His summer job the last few years was with Green Mountain Messenger.

As though his life wasn't full enough, he loved his outdoor sports. He could often be found out snowmobiling in the winter, riding his motorcycle or at the Stock car races. He was watching cars anywhere from the Milton Drag Strip, where he and friend Bill Bigelow raced their car, Catamount Stadium where he had a seat in The Pits, to other venues throughout the eastern coast. He followed the circuit watching the local Dragon brothers as well across New England. He followed NASCAR closely and visited many NASCAR courses in his days. His love for cars didn't stop with building, restoring and repairing them or watching them run on the track. He himself did a little drag racing up across the border with his PT Cruiser in the last decade. He had a prized red convertible PT cruiser with eagles and the American flag emblazoned on it. In 2003 Vern joined the Northern New England Cruiser Club and toured around to car shows and appeared in parades like the Essex Memorial Day Parade or Bristol's 4th of July parade. Coming down the road all in a row, his grandkids watched for Grandpa Vern's cruiser. One of his greatest experiences with the club was when they drove down to Watkins Glen driving their cruisers around the track. He had won many show awards with his car, leaving behind many trophies as part of his legacy. He loved driving, seeing and visiting new places. I can't think of many states that he had not been through.

Vern is survived by his children Kelley and husband Brian (Bessette) of Richmond, Kerry of Milton, Kathleen of Milton, Kasey and husband Steve (Gozza) of Jeffersonville, Corey Centerbar of Milton and Amber Lee of Otis, LA; grandchildren Taryn Centerbar, Caitlin Bessette and fiance' Robert Terry, Allyson (Bessette) and spouse Ralph Burbo, Joshua Centerbar, Eden (Armeli) and spouse Matthew Wrisley, Elizabeth Centerbar, Brittany Katon and Taylor, Olivia, Patrick and Adam Croteau; great grandchildren James O'Neal, Kaydence Katon, Isaac Terry and Keira and Aaliyah Cota. He is also survived by his sisters Nancy J Centerbar, Susan and Gary (Smith) all of MS and Donna (Morgan) of KY; his great lifelong friends Lenny and Marilyn Richie and Shimmy Cohen; his two remaining aunts, Lila Shepard (Francis) and Verna Shepard (Martelle) and their families; his god-daughter Lisa Sanderson (St. Onge) and many, many cousins and friends he made throughout his lifetime including his PT Cruiser buddies.

Vern was predeceased by his parents; his special aunt and uncle, Hilda and Clifford Sanderson; his elder sister Nancy; his infant great grandson Andrew Terry and most recently his favored cousin Dana Sanderson; plus many other special family and friends along the way, each he remembered fondly.

A special thank you to our Mom Joyce for taking him in and caring for him during the bulk of his illness; Dr Amy Denis of the VA Clinic of Burlington for all the attentive care he received and the entire staff at the McClure Respite House in Colchester for the special care and attention they provided his last few weeks; he loved it there.

Because of the current COVID-19 restrictions the family will schedule a celebration of life at a later date. His final resting place will be at the VT Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Randolph VT.

In lieu of flowers, we wish donations be made in Dad's name to the McClure Miller Respite House, 3113 Roosevelt Highway, Colchester VT 05446.