



Don Paquette

May 29, 1947 - June 9, 2025

After a long, brave battle with cancer, Don Paquette of Martinsville, Indiana, and formerly of Bloomington, Indiana, passed away peacefully in his sleep at home. So many people knew and loved Don for his myriad of accomplishments and roles in his life: a faithful life partner, a father and grandfather who always enjoyed sharing experiences instead of things, a brother sailor on a nuclear submarine, a project engineer with stern focus at Otis Elevator, a stinky hiker the Appalachian trail, a good neighbor and emu wrestler, a joyous private pilot or scuba diver or caver. He helped to develop the National Cave Rescue Commission for the NSS and was active in cave rescue his entire life. He was my domestic partner for 42 years and sent me roses every Valentine's Day. The Easter Bunny always showed up even when we hiked the AT. He could fix anything around our house or on our vehicles. He also did a lot of woodworking and made many of the pieces in our home: He was especially proud of the full-sized Blackjack table he fashioned and would deal many hands for our friends and family at parties. Even though Don and I met in a cave and we caved, hiked, camped, and canoed together, we also went on lots of cruises and enjoyed all types of music. Don loved Willie Nelson, Beethoven, his children, his friends, and me.

Don touched many lives; he graduated from Bloomington High School in 1965 and from the U.S. Navy Nuclear Power School in 1969, serving in the U.S. Navy from 1966 until 1973. He received his Bachelor of General Studies from

Indiana University in 1984 and his Master of Business Administration from Indiana Wesleyan University in 1991. Don worked as the senior facilities engineer for Otis Elevator from 1973 until 1995, as a teacher for Ivy Tech Community College for ten years part-time and for two years full-time, and for Applied Performance Strategies from 1999 until 2019. He was a life member and fellow of the National Speleological Society and National Cave Rescue Coordinator from 1984-1993. He was also an amateur radio operator, WB9TLI.

He is survived by his life partner, Jo Ellen (O'Hair) Kimmel; daughter, Kerri Lynn (Rich Maynard) Jean; son, Christopher Blair (Kimberly) Paquette; grandchildren, Kelsey Lynn (Mitchell) Oard, Cayden Christopher Paquette, Kale Emerson Paquette, and Claire Addison Paquette; great grandchildren, Knox and Nora Oard; stepson, Alex Robert (April Adkins) Kimmel; step grandchildren, Aquene Rose (Rachel) Payne and Joel Andrew Kimmel; and his first wife and the mother of his children, Vicky (Stipp) VanMeter.

Don was preceded in death by his parents, Donald J. Paquette and Minnie L. (Young) Paquette, and his son in-law, Jeffrey Michael Jean.

Military honor rites for Don will be held at 5:00p.m. on Friday, June 13, 2025, at Allen Funeral Home and Crematory in Bloomington. Visitation for family and friends will be held at the funeral home on Friday from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m..

Memorial donations in honor of Don may be made to the National Speleological Society (NSS) for the National Cave Rescue Commission's Education Endowment Fund (6001 Pulaski Pike Huntsville, AL 35810 or caves.org) or to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (799 Washington St., PO Box 807 Harpers Ferry WV 25425 or appalachiantrail.org).

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUN 13. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory
4155 S. Old State Road 37
Bloomington, IN 47401
(812) 824-5905
<http://www.allencares.com>

Military Service

JUN 13. 5:00 PM (ET)

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory
4155 S. Old State Road 37
Bloomington, IN 47401
(812) 824-5905
<http://www.allencares.com>

Tribute Wall

BR

“ Our Heart felt condolences go out to Chris and the entire family. You are all in our thoughts and prayers.

Bill & Terri Rinder

Bill Rinder - June 13, 2025 at 04:54 PM

GB

“ Don's contributions to NCRC have been immense. I can't help but smile when I think of him teaching, his gruff demeanor coupled with a ready smile and a good sense of humor. His willingness to teach and serve for so many years are extremely appreciated.

Gretchen Baker - June 13, 2025 at 09:11 AM

GB

“ Gretchen B. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Don Paquette.

Gretchen B. - June 13, 2025 at 09:07 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Don Paquette.



June 12, 2025 at 11:27 AM

BW

“ Brenda Spurgeon and Corrie Wellborne purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Don Paquette.



Brenda Spurgeon and Corrie Wellborne - June 11, 2025 at 07:09 PM

DG

“ Dollar General purchased the Florist Choice Bouquet for the family of Don Paquette.



Dollar General - June 11, 2025 at 12:34 PM

SR

“ Steve & Marty Reames planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Don Paquette.

Steve & Marty Reames - June 11, 2025 at 07:54 AM

SR

“ Steve & Marty Reames purchased the Blue Caribbean Bouquet for the family of Don Paquette.



Steve & Marty Reames - June 11, 2025 at 07:54 AM

JK

“ Joel Andrew Kimmel planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Don Paquette.

Joel Andrew Kimmel - June 11, 2025 at 12:02 AM

JK

“ Joel Andrew Kimmel purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Don Paquette.



Joel Andrew Kimmel - June 11, 2025 at 12:02 AM

SD

“Forty two years ago as a relatively newbie caver, I made my first trip to James Cave, a weekend that set the course for much of my life. My baptism by fire was a crossover trip from the Foot Dome Entrance to the Historic Entrance with Don, along with Cat and Charlie Bishop. After 10 hours and 14 rope pitches, I was facing a 70' climb to the tourist trail at Forty Fathom Pit and looking (finally) at a clean piece of PMI after endless feet of muddy Goldline. I was so exhausted at the top than when I heaved myself over the handrail, I got tangled the rope and my climbing gear, suspended 2" off the bridge deck, too tired to free myself. Don helped me off the rope and up to my feet. For unexplainable and masochistic reasons, and despite Don's probable doubts, I never stopped coming back. I shared many cave trips with Don, including our discovery of the Indiana Jones Passage in Reynold's Cave, where we were chased out of the passage by a falling, rolling boulder. Working in the James Cave Project was a highlight of my life, and Don was a big part of it. Don, thanks for the friendship, the cave trips, the stories around the campfires, and all the comradery that goes with project caving, I treasured it all.

-Steve Duncan

Steve Duncan - June 10, 2025 at 11:35 PM

DP

“May you be at peace my brother. Love David Paquette

David Paquette - June 10, 2025 at 10:20 PM