

## **Ronald Burke, 80**

SHAPLEIGH - Ron Burke of Shapleigh, loving husband, father, master potter/craftsman and teacher, passed away early Tuesday morning on May 24, 2016, from cancer-related pneumonia. Ron was born in 1935 in Girardville, Pa., to William F. Burke and Anne Yurkonis Burke. He graduated from Elmira (N.Y.) Southside High School and earned a B.S. in education from SUNY Oswego and an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art (MI). He married his college sweetheart, Tess, and together they shared 58 years of marriage while living in New York, Michigan, Canada, North Carolina and Maine, and raised three children.

Ron began his career as a studio potter while living in Rock Tavern, N.Y. In 1973 he and the family moved to Shapleigh, where he built his studio in the former dairy barn. Ron estimated he made by hand and sold approximately 34,000 clay objects, mostly stoneware vessels (bowls, mugs, plates, vases, etc.), but also sculptures, bath and kitchen accessories, clocks, tiles, etc. Ron's work can be found in numerous homes worldwide. His work has been featured in museum, gallery, and studio exhibitions and collections across North America.

In addition to his prolific studio work, Ron was also an inspiring teacher who taught at Phillips Exeter Academy and as visiting professor or instructor at the University of Manitoba, SUNY New Paltz, the University of Southern Maine, the University of New Hampshire, Maine College of Art, Portland Pottery, Nasson College, as a resident craftsman and instructor at Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina, and at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts. He also ran a master class program for potters at his studio.

Ron loved his beautiful old farmhouse on the Back Road in Shapleigh where he and Tess enjoyed keeping it warm, mowed and welcoming. All visitors and passersby will remember the golf driving range he created and the many sculptures he put up on the property.

Ron was a true liberal, politically and socially. He was active in the Democratic Party and equal rights campaigns. He was able to combine his passion for his art with his passion for social justice with a many-year project with the York County Shelter, where Ron designed and produced soup bowls for the Shelter's annual volunteer appreciation dinner. Ron took great pleasure in knowing hundreds of volunteers used his pottery bowls daily in their homes.

Ron is survived by his wife Tess of Shapleigh; son Brent of Portland, Ore.; daughter Tracy and her spouse Aimsel Ponti of Cape Elizabeth; daughter Tamara and her husband Emerich Hlava and their daughter Adeline of Laguna Beach, Calif.; and brother T.J. Burke of Rye Beach, N.H. The family wishes to thank the wonderful health professionals of New England Cancer Specialists, SMHC and Maine Medical who took such great care of Ron.

A brief service will be held at Autumn Green Funeral Home in Alfred on Sunday, May 29, at 2 p.m. Following the service, there will be an informal gathering to remember Ron at the York County Shelter at the Brothers on Shaker Hill Road.