



## Arthur R. Butler

December 17, 1947 - December 11, 2020

On a cold winter day nearly 73 years ago, Arthur Robb Butler was born to Ralph Otis Butler, III (deceased) and Alice Mae Butler. In what can only be considered an homage to his beloved United States Coast Guard Academy Class (USCGA '72) he peacefully cast off for his eternal haven, 72 years and three hundred fifty plus days later.

The third of seven children, Art had a happy and busy childhood. He was an Eagle Scout, a Marysville High School graduate, a football player, and a devoted brother to all. After years of helping his father with milk deliveries and running a dairy, Art gained a lifetime love of ice-cream rivaled only by his love of the sea. After two years at Michigan State University, Art heeded the siren's call to attend the Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut. "The Bear," as he was known there, played football, likely got in some escapades (which he kept hidden from his daughters), and woo'd the love of his life, Carolyn Kay Fordham, from the Academy's hallowed halls. After a very public proposal to a very private person, Art somehow convinced the most beautiful and intelligent woman in the world to join in his adventures in 1972.

Their adventures took them from Michigan to Italy, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Maryland. Along the way their family grew by leaps and bounds: both literally with the births of "his girls" Kristin and Megan, and figuratively with the countless life-long friends, sons, and daughters he

informally adopted. After twenty years of service, CDR Arthur Butler retired from the Coast Guard and moved to his home port of Plymouth, MI.

Over the past nearly three decades, Art has poured his life into his community and his family. He has served as President of the Rotary Club of Plymouth, on the board of Directors of the Plymouth United Way, as President of the Church Council at Risen Christ Lutheran Church, and as legal council for numerous other organizations that were near and dear to him. Art remained a practicing attorney in the State of Michigan until his illness. Art was also able to watch his family grow with the addition of five grandchildren and a son-in-law. He also informally adopted a few more daughters, and acted as favorite uncle to many nieces and nephews of multiple generations.

As is befitting of such a great man, Art's crew is large. His first mate and beautiful bride of 48 years, Carolyn Kay Butler, is left waving from the shore beside his daughters, Col Kristin KB McCall, USAF, Kristin's husband Lt Col Jonathan McCall, USAF, and their children Duncan Arthur, Áine Kay, and Meara Elizabeth, and Megan Marie Butler Schlanser, and her son Adam Rodney and daughter Jaclyn Read. Art is also survived by his mother, Alice Mae Rankin Butler, his brother Ralph Otis Butler IV and wife Elizabeth, his sister Barbara Lansing and husband Jack, sister Beverly Davis and husband Glenn, brother Brinton Butler, sister Lorraine Pillow, brother George Butler and wife Teri, his sister-in-law Barbara Troupos and husband Pete, and his sister-in-law Debra Behmlander and husband Daniel. His deckhands include 26 beloved nieces and nephews and nearly 40 great nieces and nephews. The second watch of crewmates left ashore includes, among others, his brothers in blue especially CDR Carl Smith, the cadets he adopted including CDR Mike Raber and his family, his exchange student, Staffan, his Midshipmen: Laura, Kelvin, Steve, Jack, and Amy; and his adopted daughters Megan Ivey and Kathryn Swan.

While many join us in grieving that he must make this part of his sea voyage alone, we rejoice that he is called home to stand watch by the ultimate Captain and our savior and is able to watch over us from above.

A service celebrating his life will be held at Risen Christ Lutheran Church on Wednesday, December 16, 2020 at 1 pm. Visitation will be held at Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home on Monday from 6 pm to 9 pm, Tuesday from 1 pm to 4 pm and 6 pm to 9 pm. Final respects may also be paid at Risen Christ Lutheran Church from 12 pm to 1 pm. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the National Coast Guard Museum Association at [www.coastguardmuseum.org](http://www.coastguardmuseum.org) or the Plymouth Rotary Foundation at P.O. Box 5401 Plymouth, MI 48170. To share a memory with the family, please use the "Share a Memory" tab on this web page.

# Cemetery Details

## Arlington National Cemetery

Arlington, VA

# Previous Events

## Visitation

DEC 14. 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM (ET)

Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home Plymouth  
46401 Ann Arbor Road West  
Plymouth, MI 48170  
(734) 459-2250  
plymouth@vermeulenfh.com

## Visitation

DEC 15. 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home Plymouth  
46401 Ann Arbor Road West  
Plymouth, MI 48170  
(734) 459-2250  
plymouth@vermeulenfh.com

## Visitation

DEC 15. 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM (ET)

Vermeulen-Sajewski Funeral Home Plymouth  
46401 Ann Arbor Road West  
Plymouth, MI 48170  
(734) 459-2250  
plymouth@vermeulenfh.com

## In state

DEC 16. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (ET)

Risen Christ Lutheran Church  
46250 Ann Arbor Road West  
Plymouth, MI 48170

## Funeral Service

DEC 16. 1:00 PM - 1:30 PM (ET)

Risen Christ Lutheran Church  
46250 Ann Arbor Road West  
Plymouth, MI 48170

# Tribute Wall



“ *Arthur R. Butler*

December 07, 2023 at 05:11 AM



“ *I had talked to Art a month or two before his passing and, being so remote now, did not hear of his death until now. I'm so sorry and offer condolences to the entire family. Art was my attorney through some tough times and became a friend in the process. His humor, his empathy, his friendship were treasured, and I'm sorry that distance and time let our relationship become less regular. He will be missed. I'm am truly saddened.*

**Curt MacRae** - March 15, 2021 at 11:08 AM



“ *To the family of Art Butler,*

*I just saw the posting of Art's passing. Please accept my heartfelt condolences for your loss. My memories go back to Marysville, Michigan where I grew up with Art's brother, Brinton.*

*I recall a fun event in 1973 or 1974 when I was a "Tenderfoot" in the local Boy Scout troop. Art was a senior scout at the time and led a group of younger scouts on a five mile hike along a section of the unfinished I-94 freeway between Gratiot Avenue and Wadhams Road.*

*Regards,  
Mike Pohl  
Canton, Michigan*

**Michael Pohl** - February 08, 2021 at 09:59 AM

MP

*Correction. The hike was in 1963.*

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**Michael Pohl** - February 08, 2021 at 10:06 AM

RK

“ *I just learned of Art’s passing and am deeply saddened for his wonderful family and by the loss of such a kind, decent, brilliant human being. We were law school classmates and Art was one of the two people responsible for my entry into the Coast Guard to serve alongside him as a uniformed Coast Guard lawyer. It was a privilege that changed my life and I will never forget him for that. Although our careers somewhat diverged later on, we remained good friends. Michele and I have the fondest memories of sailing with Art and his family as far back as the “Sea Thumper” days. Fair winds and following seas, my friend! Semper Paratus.*

*Bob and Michele Kelly  
Annapolis*

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**Robert Kelly** - December 31, 2020 at 03:20 PM

SW

“ *There will never be another like him. I will miss his jokes every time he came in the bank! He was the BEST joke teller! LOL Another thing I will always remember was what a proud husband, father and grandfather he was! He will be missed!!!*

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**Susan Wille** - December 31, 2020 at 02:19 PM

AB

“ You are so missed Uncle Art. Your laugh and smile could light up a room and will never be forgotten. Sending much love to Aunt Carolyn, Kristin, Jon, Megan and all the kids. I wish I could be there to give each of you a big hug but unfortunately it is just not possible with this pandemic environment. Praying for peace and love for each of you as you navigate the coming days. I love you all.

-Alicia

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**Alicia Butler** - December 16, 2020 at 08:58 AM

GB

“ The world lost a great leader, and I, a great big brother. Art was bigger than life, and a natural born leader, which bode well for his career and passion as a Coast Guard Officer. Mel Gibson in a movie called "We Were Soldiers" discussed with a subordinate about being both a parent and a soldier, in that "I hope being good at one makes me better at the other." I immediately thought of Art when I heard this line, as Art was a perfect example of a great father, brother and son, as well as an outstanding officer and leader. He learned compassion and nurturing from his family as he was a fantastic father, and he learned to inspire and motivate others through his time as an Officer, always with a "take charge" attitude. When our Dad died, Art stepped up and gave the Eulogy and cited a poem by Henry Van Dyke, using the analogy of a ship sailing across the ocean to get to the distant shore. Art said he pictured my Dad on the distant shore waiting for each of us to arrive. That gave me comfort to think I too will someday reunite with my loved ones when my day to set sail comes. Art is our leader, the first of my family to navigate these waters to the other side to be with Dad, setting sail and leading us along the way. Until then, it comforts me to know he will continue to look over me and guide me through life as my Guardian Angel. And when my time comes, I am certain he will be there, lighting my way, to help navigate me eventually to the distant shore to once again reunite with him and our Dad. Until then Art, fair winds and following seas and tell Dad Hi for me.

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George Butler - December 15, 2020 at 06:44 PM

SD

“ I remember Art talking, and talking - "there's more" - and talking more about Carolyn's Reader's Pillows to be part of the Risen Christ annual craft event a few years ago. He was so very funny! The whole congregation was laughing! His wit, infectious smile, and warmth will be greatly missed by all of us at RCLC. Rest in Peace and Love with our Lord, dear Art!

*Susan Drummond*

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**Susan Drummond** - December 15, 2020 at 06:32 PM

LH

“ So many memories of our time in Michigan and our friendships with the Butler family. We remember Art always smiling, always pleasant, always friendly, always kind, and a man who most likely never met a stranger. We enjoyed all of our encounters with this family, whether taking in a show at the Fox Theater, having a nice dinner together, or just hanging out and spending time. Art has gone far too soon, and will be missed by a great many people. We are thankful for the time we had with him and for the legacy he has left behind. Prayers for this amazing family.

*With love,  
Larry & Barbara Huddleston*

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**Larry & Barbara Huddleston** - December 15, 2020 at 03:37 PM



“ *Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Arthur R. Butler.*



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December 15, 2020 at 02:38 PM

MF

“ Always presented himself with a smile, never spoke ill of anyone, and was a good, caring man. I am so grateful Gina and I got to visit Art and Carolyn last July, and share a meal with them. Art was a great encouragement to me, when I started a 10-year journey of night school, back in 1987. Art lived a loving, adventurous life; it was cut short too early. I will miss you, and your smile, my shipmate and friend.

*Michael Fiset*

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**Michael Fiset** - December 15, 2020 at 12:48 PM

JS

“ Exactly 25 years ago, Art Butler was in the midst of practicing law in my Law Office on Main St. in Plymouth. He practiced Law according to his religious Faith.

Art Butler lived his life with a positive idealism and he adhered to his moral principles.

What has he taught us ? His Code of conduct was 3-part: 1.) Integrity 2.) Responsibility and 3.) Justice.

Art was nurtured in a large family. He was very proud of earning his Eagle Scout.

As a Rotarian, he lived by the 4-Way Test.

Four years ago, I asked Art to be the Narrator for the Service Medley performed by the Michigan Philharmonic in Kellogg Park on the Saturday night before the 4th. of July. He appeared on stage in full dress uniform and at the exact right time in the music, he asked Veterans to stand for: The United States Army, the United States Navy, The United states Air Force, the United States Marines, and his beloved United States Coast Guard. He was precise and completely accurate in his presentation. All the Veterans and the 1,000 + people loved it from his community.

Most important, family was first and meant everything to Art. Yes, absolute and unconditional love for Carolyn, Kristin and Megan and the rest of his entire family.

Art exemplified the BEST and he inspired us to be our BEST.

Well done Thou good and faithful servant !

John C. Stewart

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John Stewart - December 15, 2020 at 12:22 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket* was purchased for the family of Arthur R. Butler.



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December 15, 2020 at 09:18 AM



“ *The Burnham Family* purchased the *Sweet Tenderness* for the family of Arthur R. Butler.



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**The Burnham Family** - December 14, 2020 at 05:03 PM



“ *Dreams From the Heart Bouquet* was purchased for the family of Arthur R. Butler.



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December 14, 2020 at 01:17 PM

MR

“ My entire family greatly misses Art and will always cherish his memory. His generosity knew no limits. He would drop everything, without notice, to help a fellow human. Myself and my family have been on the receiving end of his good grace more times than I can count. Although many of his gifts were of the day-to-day variety, more than a few were from the huge life event category. And many included driving. Basically, Art served as a guardian angel for the last 44 years, and now he has a much better vantage point. We look forward to another one of his gigantic hugs when we get back together. Much love and sympathy, Mike, Geri, Ally and Nick Raber.

Mike Raber - December 14, 2020 at 01:12 PM

SC

I know this may be very late to some people. The last time I saw him I was working in Kroger in plymouth. He was with his wife. I believe it was just before the holidays(2020). He was such a good man. When you walked into his office he made me feel right at home and everything is gonna be just fine. Before I left his office he would always give on of reassuring hug. It was a pleasure knowing him.. Mrs. Butler and Family, my heart goes out to you all, I'm so very sorry for your loss, God Bless you all.

Sonya Capeling - October 20, 2021 at 07:37 PM



“ Tender Tribute was purchased for the family of Arthur R. Butler.



December 14, 2020 at 12:42 PM

MG

“ *Art was always a true gentleman. He was a professional. A couple of years ago I would see him and chat at Planet Fitness. He will be missed.*

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**Mike Gerou** - December 14, 2020 at 11:11 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Arthur R. Butler.*



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December 13, 2020 at 10:36 PM



“ *Sacred Duty Spray was purchased for the family of Arthur R. Butler.*



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December 13, 2020 at 08:32 PM

HY

“ Knowing Art Butler, for us, was knowing a brother, a gentleman, and the kind of friend that always has your back.

He was uplifting and fun while always unfailing in his convictions, a man of the highest principles, which he shared with Carolyn and his daughters. He will be remembered always for his complete devotion to his God, his family, and his friends - an example of living life in the best way.

We loved you, Art, and we love your family. Rest In peace with the Lord, friend.

*Helen and Foster*

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**Helen and Foster Yancy** - December 13, 2020 at 08:23 PM

DC

“ Brownie and I are so sorry to hear about Art. We will always remember

being neighbors in Annapolis and watching the girls play lacrosse and field hockey.

Our great memories will be sharing the neighborhood marina and boating on the Chesapeake..

God bless you Carolyn ,Kristin and Megan and your beautiful grandchildren.

You are all in our thoughts and prayers.

*Donna&Brownie*

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**Donna Cordell** - December 13, 2020 at 07:44 PM

AC

“ Carolyn, Kristin and Megan, know that we have you in our prayers and thoughts on the loss of a Great Husband, Father, Grandfather and Friend to all. May the wonderful memories you have of Art bring you comfort. God Bless! Love, Al and Aida Cipriani

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**Al & Aida Cipriani** - December 13, 2020 at 03:24 PM

KK

“ *What a mountain of a man your Dad was, Megan! So full of love and kindness, and laughter!! The loss you feel is a hole that will never be quite the same again. However, I know that your Dad is smiling down from the streets of gold, beaming with pride at the family that he and your Mom created. Cling close to one another and the happy memories that you shared. They are going to get you through until you see him again, along with your Heavenly Father! Love you Sis! Always here of you need anything. ALWAYS.*

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**Kelly Kinney** - December 13, 2020 at 01:28 PM

MI

“ *Art Butler is one of the kindest and giving men I have ever met. I will forever treasure the memories out on the sailboat with Kristin and the entire family, our fantastic trip together to Hawaii and his consistent support and acceptance of me. He was a father to me, providing guidance and love. His deep faith in Jesus inspired me and provided a path for how to live a meaningful life. He devoted his time and energy to so many good causes. The Butler family has lost a treasure on this earth. But I am more than confident that he will serve as a guardian angel for everyone in the amazing Butler family. My heart hurts for the loss of Mr. B. Prayers to everyone that knew and loved him. His legacy will forever live on.*

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**Megan Ivey** - December 13, 2020 at 01:13 PM

LV

“ I am so sorry, Carolyn! Your love for each other, which was always so evident, embraced all of us who came to know you. May that love find a path to comfort you as you continue life’s journey. My vivid memories are of the two complementary elements in Art’s personality: Standing tall in his formal white dress uniform, and his jolly Santa presentation that brought smiles to both children and adults. He was among the many gifts you brought to the Henry Ford Community. Thank you! Larry Vidovic

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**Larry Vidovic** - December 13, 2020 at 12:56 PM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Arthur R. Butler.



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December 13, 2020 at 12:37 PM

BB

“ Missed, but not forgotten; forever in our hearts and minds. Rest in peace my friend, and classmate.

*Henry F. (Buck) Baley, CAPT, USCG (Ret), and honored to be called a CGA '72 Classmate...*

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**Buck Baley** - December 13, 2020 at 11:46 AM

T(

“ *RIP Big Guy as you cross the bar with taps a'blowing...you made us all better in having known you as a Classmate in the Coast Guard Academy Class of 1972, and as a fellow Coast Guard officer throughout our careers together.*

*Terry Newell, CAPT, USCG (Ret.)*

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**Terry Newell, CAPT, USCG (Ret.)** - December 13, 2020 at 09:28 AM

JR

“ *The world has lost a great man. Art always carried himself in great faith and love of his family, god and country. His glowing personality and silly jokes will be missed. Our deepest condolences to Carolyn and his family. The Rapai's*

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**James Rapai** - December 12, 2020 at 09:30 PM

TS

“ *The picture says it all about Art. A jovial gentleman who loved life and was a cherished classmate of the USCG Academy class of 1972. He will be missed. Blessings to Carolyn and the entire Butler family.*

*Tony Stimatz*

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**Tony Stimatz** - December 12, 2020 at 08:55 PM