



## Barbara L. Leonard

December 9, 1944 - May 4, 2020

Barbara Louise (Sorenson) Leonard left the physical world unexpectedly on Monday, May 4, 2020. Barb loved her family more than anything and, in return, she was loved by many people. She was a beautiful person who loved to laugh, was very kind, incredibly intelligent, had a sharp wit and used very colorful language in her storytelling. The outpouring of condolences since her departure are a tribute to the amazing person she was. Affectionately known as “Mom,” “Mrs. Leonard,” “Nana,” “Nana Barb,” “Aunt Barb” and “Nanadietcoke,” she will be missed by many.

Barbara was born in Rhinelander, Wisconsin at St. Mary’s Hospital on December 9, 1944. As an “Air Force brat,” Barbara moved often throughout her early life before landing in Ohio as a teenager. She attended Beavercreek High School where she was popular, a cheerleader, made life-long friends and married her high school sweetheart, Louis (Bud) Leonard (divorced). The young couple settled in Kettering, OH and began their family. If you talked to Barb at any length you were bound to hear a story or two about her three boys. In the early days, as her boys grew, the Leonard house was a gathering place for neighbor kids – who referred to Barb as “Mom” or “Mrs. Leonard” – and still do to this day. While she raised her three boys and attended Sinclair Community College for a degree in nursing, amongst other jobs, Barbara was the “Branch Lady” for the Dayton Daily News. This role cemented her as a pillar of the neighborhood who was known by everyone. She worked third shift her entire career to free up her days to go to activities for her boys, and later, her grandkids. From summer swim meets to football games to plays, if her boys were competing or performing or receiving an award, she was in the audience. Barb was thrilled when her oldest son decided to attend Sinclair and become a nurse just as she had done. She hated when Rob moved to Maine and Utah for graduate school – but was proud of his achievements. And she was so proud of Mark’s determination and graduation from Urbana. She loved being a part of her boys’ lives and wanted to be present for every birthday and celebration large and small. She once said of Rob’s half marathon running, “I’m not going to let you run a half marathon and not be there when you finish!” Barb, or Nana Barb, loved her grandkids and loved being able to be part of so many milestones in their lives. She was there when they were all born and was there for many doctors appointments and hospital visits. She insisted on babysitting all 5 grandkids as

much as possible to keep them out of “baby jail.” Nana Barb loved taking the grandkids on adventures to parks, zoos and other attractions. She never said, “No” in the gift shop and spoiled her grandkids at every opportunity. And as they grew, she loved taking them shopping and out to eat and to movies. She was a very proud mother and grandmother who loved every moment of watching her sons and her grandchildren live their lives. Shortly after graduating college in 1975, she began her 32 year career at the Dayton Veteran’s Administration Hospital as a Registered Nurse. Barbara was an extremely caring nurse who had a genuine concern for her patients’ care. She received several awards for her service and for her innovations. She was on the forefront of patient care during the AIDS epidemic and never wavered in her care of her patients. Several of her former colleagues have noted, “She was the best nurse I ever worked with.” One of her colleagues said, “You were lucky if you were on a shift with Barb.”

For 30 years Barbara worked the midnight shift. After many years of the third shift being “overlooked” by the VA for the annual Christmas party, Barbara took it upon herself to create the “Beautiful Night People” Christmas party. She would spend several days cooking and shopping and then, on her night off, she would set up, serve and clean up a Christmas Party for the 100+ third shift workers. She continued this tradition for over 15 years up until her retirement. But the work didn’t stop there, for the past several years Barb has been an active member of the VA Employees Retirement luncheon committee. Again, each year, she spent many days helping to organize, set up and clean up after the luncheon. She was not only a passionate care-giver for the patients at the VA, but also a passionate and caring co-worker.

For her efforts at work and in the community, Barbara Leonard received the 2005 Alumni Association Service Award from Sinclair Community College.

Barb never slowed down in retirement. She was becoming quite a painter and enjoyed her Paint and Wine (Pop) classes with family. She liked going to sporting events, the theatre and Indigo Girls concerts. She was always up for a trip to a casino. She loved to travel and was looking forward to another trip to Wisconsin to visit her beloved Aunt Jean and her cousins. She was terribly disappointed that the trip to California to see her Brother Scott, Sister-in-Law Lenna and Niece Maiken for Maiken’s college graduation was canceled. It was even more disappointing because she was also looking forward to seeing her Brother Larry, Sister-in-Law Carol, Nephew Erik, Niece-in-Law Tenya, Great-Nephew Rucker and Niece Elyse for Rucker’s baptism.

As much as she gave to her family, she gave to her community. Barb always left very generous tips for anyone in a service industry position. She volunteered formally and informally with so many organizations. She loved to tell stories about the last-minute shoppers she saw while volunteering to wrap presents on Christmas Eve for the Domestic Violence Shelter. She served Thanksgiving Dinner to the homeless, walked for the March of Dimes and for Breast Cancer Awareness and she donated money to just about any

charity who asked. And she would never walk past the bell ringers during the holidays without putting something in the bucket.

Per her wishes, Barb will be cremated, and her ashes spread at a private ceremony with immediate family. She is survived by her three sons and their families: her Son Chris Leonard (Miamisburg) and Daughter-in-Law Beth, Granddaughter Emily and Grandsons, Jack and Greg; her Son Rob Leonard (Kettering) and the Snooty Sisters; and Son Mark Leonard (Centerville) and (former) Daughter-in-Law Shelley (Sloan), Grandson Daniel and Granddaughter Kendall. She will be welcomed into heaven by her parents Dorothy (Dobbe) and Lt. Col. Richard Sorenson.

Barb rarely said, “goodbye” at the end of phone call. Instead, she liked to say, “love you, hug you, miss you, kiss you!”

In lieu of flowers, if you are so inclined, please remember Barb with a donation to the Dayton Veteran’s Administration Center at <https://www.dayton.va.gov/giving/index.asp>

# Comments

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“ My deepest sympathy and prayers to Barb's family. She was a very caring, giving and loveable lady. I will miss our VA Retirees luncheon adventures. couldn't have done it so easily without you Rob. Barb loved her family. You were her life. Rest in Peace my friend. Sandy Shook

**Sandy** - May 18, 2020 at 07:04 PM

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“ To the family. first let me say that you have my deepest sympathy and my prayers go out to you. Although, I never actually worked with you, we met and shared a lot of memories of people and other things. I will never forget your infectious laughter and your sense of humor. I will miss you, no one can ever take your place! The VA Retirees Committee and lunches will not be the same. I think of the hours, we all put in the luncheon a success, which without Rob's help, we could not have made it. May God bless you and take his loving arms around the family, this is the hour of your needs,

Betty Murphy Kimbell

**Betty Murphy Kimbell** - May 18, 2020 at 04:11 PM

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“ To Barb's family, my deepest condolences and prayers. I knew Barb my entire nursing career. I also went to Sinclair for nursing and started work as a nurse at the Veterans Administration in 1975. I worked the night shift for many years also, although on the same floor as Barb but on the other end, prior to transferring to the intensive care unit. I remember her sense of humor most of all, and her stories about her adventures, especially with Rob. We also worked together on the VA Retiree Luncheon Committee for many years. She was a very caring person who did not suffer fools. I will miss her wit and her willingness to do what needed to be done for us to have a successful event. May God bless you all and comfort you as you grieve your loss. Marcia Catlett

**Marcia Catlett** - May 18, 2020 at 03:20 PM

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“ I am so very sorry for the loss of your mom. She was a pretty special lady. She always kept me entertained with her stories and opinions. She was my favorite person to talk to at your social gatherings. She was quite the character and witty, but always practical and no nonsense. She will be truly missed.  
 Laura Tyrrell

Laura Stover Tyrrell - May 17, 2020 at 11:28 AM

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“ So sorry to hear of the loss of your Mom.. I remember her having a quick sense of humor and being a sweet lady.. John Kelch

John Kelch - May 17, 2020 at 09:21 AM

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“ I was fortunate to work on third shift with Barb. She had a great sense of humor, and was always willing to listen when I had an issue. She would ask me if I needed her gun, and then proceed to pull out an index card with a gun drawn on it. She will be greatly missed by me and her co-workers at the VA.

Terry Butler - May 13, 2020 at 01:15 AM



“ She was my friend for greater than three decades. Our trips to Vegas, my family reunions, my conventions and many other events and not once did she complained. She helped me to set up for many events. Great friend to me and my three sons. Poor Rob , we pulled him along with us and I never heard him complain. Chris joined us a few times and never complained. Mark took us to Cincinnati Reds baseball game in 102 degrees temperature we almost had heat stroke. I loved my friend and her family as she loved me and my family. I shall miss her dearly. My heart is broken , time will make it a bit easier. God Bless you Friend

Thelma Boyd - May 13, 2020 at 01:29 AM

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“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Westbrock Funeral Home - May 12, 2020 at 05:31 PM



“ Chris, Rob and Mark,  
So deeply sorry to hear of your mother's passing. May the wonderful memories of your mother's love be with you and comfort you at this time. I regret that I lost contact with your mother many years ago. My sincere sympathy.  
Sue Tepper

**Sue Tepper** - May 06, 2020 at 12:33 PM