

DONALD JAMES CULLIGAN



Donald James Culligan, son, husband, United States Marine, father, grandfather, great-grandfather; former teacher, coach, and Tompkins County Representative, departed from his beloved South Hill for the next world on Sunday, November 6, 2016. Born on May 8, 1923 to Leontine Myers Culligan and George E. Culligan, Jr., Don lived an outsized life that profoundly influenced his family, students, athletes, friends, and community members. He and his late wife, Jane Elizabeth Kimple Culligan, were married for 71 years and raised 5 children: Thomas J. Culligan (Patrice, Amelia Island, FL.); Nancy J. Culligan (Ithaca, NY); Mary Ann Culligan Pitzer (Brian, Ithaca, NY); Kathryn Culligan Simon (John David Jones, Lexington, KY); and Paul G. Culligan (Michele, Troy, NY). Their home was always a lively gathering place for their extended family that included 13 grandchildren; Christa, Burke, and Brad Culligan; Patricia (Hohman), Joseph, and Susanne Yengo; Scott, Brent, and Matthew Pitzer; Claire Eileen Simon; Michael, Brian, and Kasey Culligan; and 12 great-grandchildren. An alumnus of Ithaca High School (Class of 1941), Don entered the United States Marine Corps on February 12, 1943 where he was assigned to the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing - Marine Night Fighter Squadron 533 based at Cherry Point, North Carolina. He served in the Pacific Theater of World War II in the Marshall Islands. A beneficiary of the GI Bill, Don earned his bachelor's degree in 1948 and his master's degree in 1951 from Ithaca College. He was a loyal supporter of Ithaca College and its athletic teams, attending many basketball and football games with friends well into his 80's. In 2006 Don was honored by his alma mater with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Don's 30 year successful career as a physical education teacher and athletics coach began in 1948 in Virgil, NY. Two years later he moved to Sherburne, NY where he coached football and basketball teams to undefeated seasons and conference championships. The Culligans had a lifelong affection for Sherburne, returning many times to visit friends and former students at class reunions. Don "Coach" Culligan was a legendary figure at Ithaca High School from 1956 - 1978. During that period he taught physical education, driver education and served as director of athletics. He coached many outstanding varsity basketball teams throughout his tenure compiling a 226-116 record, five Southern Tier Athletic Conference championships and five New York State Section IV titles. In 1969,

he was named Coach of the Year by the Ithaca Journal, an honor that he shared with his friend and legendary Ithaca High football coach Joe Moresco. Don retired from the Ithaca City School District in 1978. He was inducted into both the Section 4 Hall of Fame and the Ithaca High School Athletic Hall of Fame. In recognition for his dedication and service, the center court at the Ithaca High gymnasium was named Culligan Court in 2004.

Don was as involved in local politics as he was athletics. He was first elected to the Tompkins County Board of Representatives in 1957, and served his South Hill and downtown constituents retiring in 1993 as the longest-serving member of the board. He served on every board committee and was especially instrumental in the development and site selection for the Tompkins County Library, Tompkins Cortland Community College, the Cayuga Medical Center, and the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport. Don's civic participation included serving on the board of directors of the Finger Lakes Association and membership in Ithaca Lodge 636 of the BPO Elks, as well as the City Club. Don's favorite pastime was entertaining family and friends on the back porch. Don and Jane made many trips across the country to visit friends, children, and grandchildren and were enthusiastic fans at a World Series, a Super Bowl, and a NCAA Final Four basketball tournament. His sense of humor; his devotion to family, students, athletes, and friends; and his commitment to bettering his community enriched the lives of countless people. He was a true champion. With compassionate and loving care from their caregivers, Don and Jane were able to stay in the home they loved as their health declined over the last several years. The Culligan family is eternally grateful to Becky Byrd, Ericka Smiley, and Tammi Ferris for their dedication and tender attention to the well-being of our parents. In addition, the family would like to thank Dr. Lucia Jander for her care and guidance.

Calling hours will be held Friday, November 11th from 4 - 6 p.m. at Bangs Funeral Home, A Mass of Christian Burial will be held on Saturday, November 12th at 9 a.m. at Immaculate Conception Church, 113 N. Geneva St., Ithaca NY. In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to: Ithaca High School Athletic Booster Association c/o Ithaca High School Athletic Department 1401 N Cayuga Street or Hospicare, 172 East King Road, Ithaca, NY 14850.

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