



## Ronald E. Helgren

June 16, 1929 - June 25, 2025

Ronald Edwin Helgren, age 96, passed away peacefully on June 25, 2025, at the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center in Iron Mountain, MI.

Born on June 16, 1929, in Florence, WI, Ron lived a full and vibrant life shaped by service, dedication, friendship, and a deep love for the outdoors.

A proud Navy veteran, Ron served his country aboard a destroyer escort during his military years. His time in the service instilled in him a lifelong respect for discipline, camaraderie, and duty.

After his honorable discharge, Ron pursued a degree in early childhood education at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. He began his career as a teacher at Forest Park, Crystal Falls, MI, and through years of hard work and commitment to education, eventually rose to the role of principal, where he influenced the lives of countless students and fellow educators.

Outside the classroom, Ron found his greatest joy in nature, taking care of his vegetable garden, canning and freezing. He was an avid hunter and fisherman, known for hosting memorable deer camps with a loyal circle of friends and family. Whether deep in the Northwoods or casting a line in the Gulf, Ron was always at home in the outdoors. He had a passion for running and completed multiple marathons, as well as his last 5K race at the age of

84.

In retirement Ron split his time between Florence, WI, where his roots ran deep, and Pine Island, FL, where he enjoyed the warm winters and frequent fishing trips with friends. His stories, laughter, and quiet wisdom were fixtures around the daily 4 o'clock club, which he proudly hosted.

Ron will be remembered as a devoted educator, a steadfast friend, and a man who lived life on his own terms-with integrity, warmth, and a deep appreciation for family.

Ron is survived by his two daughters, Mary Francis of Menasha and Ellie (Stan) Skibo of Green Bay; his grandchildren, Marnie (Sterling) Phaklides, Grayne (Eydy) Skibo, Marla Francis and Pete Francis; his great-grandchildren, Maysen Sue Phaklides (7), Griffin Ron Phaklides (5), Vera Leah Skibo (10), Vince Leon Skibo (7), Komachi Francis (8) and Kento Francis (5); and his special companion, Lois LaBrecque of Marquette, Michigan.

Ron is preceded in death by his parents, Valerie and Rudy Helgren; his brothers, Russ (Doris), and Fritz (Ruth); and one grandson, Adam Francis, who was killed in a tragic accident in Tokyo, Japan on May 17, 2025.

He will be deeply missed by family, friends, former colleagues, and all who had the good fortune to know him.

Per Ron's wish, there will be no funeral service. Memorials can be sent in Ron's name to the Florence County Historical Society PO Box 162, Florence, WI 54121.

Our family extends our heartfelt gratitude to the staff at the VA Community Living Center for their kindness, compassion and excellent care they provided during his short stay there

Condolences may be expressed to the family of Ronald E. Helgren online at [www.ernashfuneralhomes.com](http://www.ernashfuneralhomes.com).

The family has entrusted the Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home of Iron Mountain with the arrangements.

# Tribute Wall

JK

“ I’m so sorry to hear of the passing of Ron and of the loss to his dear family and friends! I fortunately got to know Ron through my work at and visits to Brule Dam and the frequent encounters with him, typically when he would jog to the dam or I had a project at the dam. It eventually turned into a highlight of mine to stop in to visit him at his camp and hear the many stories of his hunting and fishing in the area (including seeing his prized cover photo on a fishing magazine during a trip out west). Later the stories included fishing in Florida which he seemed to prefer as he often looked forward to returning to Pine Island to avoid the cold snow of winters! At his camp he was catching brown trout in the spring, tending to a wonderful garden during the summer, or preparing for another fall deer hunt with his many friends. My only regret is not taking him up on his offer to join some of his fall hunting camps, but young kids kept me close to home. His other stories were of his father who was an operator at Brule Dam. Since retirement, I moved away from the area and once stopped by, but missed seeing him. Our later years were but friendly notes in Christmas cards. Ron was a special friend and will be missed as he has been since my retirement! May god bless him and his dear family and his friends who no not miss him as much or more than I do!

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**Joe Kick** - July 07, 2025 at 03:42 AM

JK

Sorry, autocorrect typo last line, ....”who likely miss him as much or more than I do!”

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**Joe Kick** - July 07, 2025 at 03:47 AM

WH

“ My sympathy to Ron's family at the loss of a loved one. I served aboard the USS Edmonds with Ron although I did not know him as we were in different divisions. I attended some 15 or 16 reunions and got to him real well. My last visit with him was February 2024 while he was wintering in Florida. I will always have a wonderful memory of the times we got together.

W. C. Holcomb

Waycross, GA

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W. C. Holcomb - July 03, 2025 at 04:34 PM

CO

“ So sorry to hear about the passing of Ron. I managed the bank in Florence and have many great memories of my chats with Ron. I still cherish a wooden basket out of birch bark that he gifted to me. I enjoyed the many stories he shared with me about his family, his marathons, his love of hunting and fishing and his property in Florida!! I still carry his business card in my wallet. Heaven is blessed with another Angel. My thoughts, prayers and deepest sympathy to the family. Cindy Olsen

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Cindy Olsen - July 01, 2025 at 07:14 PM

TG

“ Memories, long ago, appreciated time teaching with Ron and interesting times at his camp for male faculty weekend. He gave much to the staff cohesion? Sorry for Mary and family. May God provide solace.

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Tony Grudnoski - July 01, 2025 at 02:11 PM

TD

“ I taught school for 4 years back in the 60's with Ron. I remember his fun personality and hardy laugh. He was a fun guy to be around. If I remember correctly he taught elementary phy ed at that time. Good guy gone on.

Tom DeRidder - July 01, 2025 at 07:52 AM

JS

“ We felt so lucky to be Ron's neighbors in Florida! His stories, his warmth, his knowledge, his poems, his songs, his way of bringing the neighborhood together...  
He will be terribly missed, and our sincere condolences go out to his family.



Jan Spahr - June 30, 2025 at 12:51 PM

LP

“ Len Plumhoff purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Ronald E. Helgren.



Len Plumhoff - June 30, 2025 at 12:08 PM

LP

“ Len Plumhoff planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ronald E. Helgren.

Len Plumhoff - June 30, 2025 at 12:08 PM

SF

“ *Ron will be dearly missed. Thank you Ron for giving my father a big brother, and a home away from home. Visits to camp will not be the same without you.*

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**Sandy Faulkner** - June 30, 2025 at 11:55 AM