



## Michael Earl LaCombe

March 9, 1938 - December 17, 2015

On December 17th 2015 Mike LaCombe passed away surrounded by family and friends after a long battle with cancer. Mike was a dedicated husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. He was born in Flint, Michigan on March 9th, 1938 to Eugene Garfield LaCombe and Marguerite Louise Mier. Mike grew up working on his cousin's dairy farm and at his parent's hardware store. After graduating high school he joined the Navy reserve as a corpsman. While studying at Ferris State College he met his future bride, Charlene Milbourne. After graduating they married on November 7th 1959. From 1960 thru 1969 they brought five children into the world; Mark, Scott, Matt, Kathy and Kevin. Sadly, Scott passed away as an infant.

During his 30 years in the Navy Mike and his family lived in many places, from Rhode Island to Maryland to North Carolina to Texas to Illinois to Washington State to Hawaii and back to Washington where he retired with a side trip to Michigan while Mike was serving in Vietnam.

While stationed at Shepard Airforce Base in Wichita Falls, Texas Mike was one of an original class of a new idea in the Navy called a Physician's Assistant commonly referred to as a P.A. Although the time in Texas was short Mike and his family made the most of it. Mike bought a motorhome, a Winnebago, and would go camping most weekends up in Oklahoma and watch the buffalo and longhorn.

After graduating, Mike and his family moved to Great Lakes, Illinois. Although he was busy with the Navy he always had time for his kids. He took his son Mark back to Michigan and the family farm to hunt in November. He became a scoutmaster for his sons Mark and Matt and began this crazy thing called Ham Radio with Mark and later with Matt. He always made time to play football in the back yard with not only his kids but all the neighborhood kids.

Mikes next duty station landed him in the Pacific Northwest and the city of Bremerton, Washington. The other Washington. It was here that he discovered the out of doors. Mike

and his family hiked all over the Olympics, parts of Mt. Rainier and Mt. St. Helens before and after it blew its top. They made many trips to the coast to swim in the icy waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. It is also here that Mike and Mark sharpened their Ham Radio skill and became highly involved in the Amateur Radio family. This is also where Mike developed his love for fishing whether it was saltwater, freshwater or his latest endeavor, fly fishing.

Mike had many hobbies over the years and whatever hobby it was he went all in. Whatever club or organization he joined he eventually ended up becoming a major contributor to some degree. After a backpacking trip with his son Matt that resulted in a broken foot he decided it was time to start camping with a trailer. Over the years he had many types of trailers from a tent camper to a motorhome. He joined He even built his own teardrop trailer to take on his fly fishing trips. Soon after retiring Mike took up golf at Village Greens and helped run the Men's League for many years. He played many rounds with his kids and grandkids. Mike also loved to fish. Along the way he bought and sold many types of boats whether they be for saltwater or fresh water he loved fishing but what he loved most about fishing was taking his grandkids and seeing the sheer delight on their faces as they reeled in a fish. But the hobby that has lasted the longest was his involvement in Amateur Radio. Mike went on to achieve the highest license rank in amateur radio know as Extra Class Radio Amateur.

Mike was no stranger to cancer. He survived prostate and kidney cancer many years earlier. After his last diagnosis he sought support at his church only to find no group existed. That did not slow him down, he decided to form one and three years later that group still exist. Through his selflessness and his goodwill he has been able to help countless people deal and heal with cancer. He was able to give people a reason to keep going and keep fighting even when he couldn't be there.

Mike's faith has never wavered. He has endured the hardships of losing his father at an early age, losing a child as an infant. Being away from his family while protecting our country during a very unpopular war. Mike's faith was tested time and again but he never wavered. He was diagnosed with cancer twice first his prostate then a kidney. Again his faith was tested but he never wavered. Three years ago he was dealt a double blow, two types of cancer. He could have jumped ship and who would have blamed him. How much is one person supposed to take? But his faith never wavered. It only grew stronger. The weaker his body got the stronger his spirit got and the deeper his faith became.

# Cemetery

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# Events

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**Tahoma National Cemetery**  
18600 SE 240th St  
Kent, WA, 98042

**JAN**  
**9**

**Funeral Mass**

11:00AM

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St. Gabriel Catholic Church  
1150 Mitchell Ave, Port Orchard, WA, US, 98366

**JAN**  
**11**

**Graveside Service with Military Honors** 01:00PM

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Tahoma National Cemetery  
18600 SE 240th St, Kent, WA, US, 98042

# Comments

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“ A tribute video has been added.



**Rill Chapel's Life Tribute Center** - January 06, 2016 at 11:46 AM

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“ In the blink of an eye....baby to child. Blink again child to adolescent. Blink again adolescent to young adult. Another blink young adult to middle age. Blink again middle age to old age. Then the final blink and you're gone. It doesn't seem very long between the time we enter this world and the time we leave. We try and do the best we can in that short, short time.

I came into being a LaCombe late in life. I was the second wife of Mike's second son. While I may have wanted to slide in unnoticed, there was no entering into the fold of the LaCombe household quietly – there is straightforward welcoming embraces! There is always much laughter, stories, deep conversations and permanent records. I was quickly enveloped into the family and Mike became my second dad. When my own father passed away, Mike's and my relationship deepened. There were many things we talked about through the years. Many common things we shared. Mike and I shared a deep desire to connect with our family without all the distractions of everyday life, television and social media. Somehow he convinced me to organize the annual LaCombe family campout. Granted, we only had two because it was so hard to organize everyone's time and needs (hint – not ALL the LaCombe's like to “camp”). However, the times all the family gathered outdoors we all thoroughly enjoyed the time together, fishing, swimming, hiking, eating and being around the campfire together. Great conversations happen around the campfire.

Conversations were what Mike excelled at. He had a way of making you feel at ease, he was genuine. He had a way of weaving his experience into the conversation, imparting his wisdom in a way that helped you understand your own thoughts and feelings. Not all discussions were easy, but that didn't mean they were set aside. Well, there were the few times that Mike and I had to agree to disagree. Politics was a subject Mike and I sometimes could not discuss :) but even so, that didn't stand in the way of the love I know Mike had for me, nor my love for him.

In the blink of an eye, Mike was here and then he wasn't. We struggle with the pain of losing him, but rejoice in the memories he gave us. We cry, we laugh, we pause – and realize that in the blink of an eye Mike left an indelible mark on the world. His legacy is the family bonds that he nourished and cherished, the connections we have with each other and others in our lives. Mike - thank you for cultivating your children and grandchildren, and those of us that came into the family, in to who we are today. I miss your contagious smile, the twinkle in your eye and the warmth of your hugs, but I know you are free of the pain and discomfort of cancer. Until we meet again.

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Nancy LaCombe - January 09, 2016 at 11:34 PM



“ I just returned from Mike's service. I am thinking he had a very good life and was well loved. I did feel his spirit hearing Father's prayers for him at the end. I knew he felt peace.

He will be missed by many but I am happy for him. He did keep up a great front and even joked. Someone had told him he needed to bring in a speaker to share at the cancer group. This person was not in the group. Mike looked at her and quipped well we already know we are in trouble. He laughed.

But now he is free and can enjoy his eternal reward and watch over his loved ones.

Oh sorry Mike most of us still want Father to mention our beloved Seahawks at Mass.

Susan Dycus

**Susan Dycus** - January 09, 2016 at 07:17 PM

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“ i have so many memories of my grandpa! He was an amazing person and just being in the same room as him always made me feel so safe and at home. Everytime he would start talking everyone listened and wanted to hear what he had to say even if it was about Glenn beck.

When I was about 10 or 11 grandpa was super into making things out of wood. He made puzzles, he made Cameron a shoe tying thing to help him learn, and he made this little snowman figure. He asked me if I would paint the snowman and of course I was overly excited. He had all these little bottles of professional paints out and it wasn't an activity to just keep me busy. He was very particular about how I was going to paint this thing. He lectured me for what seemed like hours. At the time I just thought maybe he didn't want to display an ugly snowman but now that I'm older I know my grandpa a little better. In everything he did with us grandkids, he always made sure we did our best. He wanted us to be proud of our work. He didn't want us rushing or being sloppy. He always knew what we were capable of and he pushed us to be our best. I remember how awesome that snowman looked when I was done with it and he displayed it. He would tell people when they came over "look what karyn did, doesn't it look wonderful?"

I'm sure no one remembers the snowman or for that matter much of anything us kids have done with grandpa but we all hold those memories deep in our hearts. He made us feel so important, so confident.

About the last 5 years or so grandpa was really getting back into church and pursuing Christ. For past 2 and half years I've been doing the same and we were able to share our excitement together for what God was doing with us. I told him I had been reading the bible and loving it but kind of confused and he sent me home with his entire bible study packet that he had done in the Old Testament. He said "now I want this back!" Of course I still have it (sorry grandpa!) but I'm glad I do because it's filled with his handwriting and notes. Anyways, I think what he would want people to really know about him was how much he loves Christ and how excited he was to serve God, his family and his community. He lived a life reflecting Christ. He invested his time in people, he built them up and encouraged them. He was a good and faithful servant. Love you grandpa!

karyn - January 06, 2016 at 12:46 AM

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“ I met Mike through my friend Kevin, his youngest son. When I think of him, I always remember being about 20 years old and going to the gym to play a pickup game of basketball with a few friends also in their early twenties. The only other team to play against us was a group of “old guys” in their late forties to early fifties (my age now), and one turned out to be Mike.

I remember thinking that I probably would not even break a sweat, and Mike’s team didn’t have a chance against us. Then, the game started, and I quickly felt sorry for my team and me. My team and I were dripping sweat, hearts pounding, panting to catch our breath, missing shots, getting shots blocked while the “old guys” looked like the Harlem Globe Trotters. We didn’t have a chance.

I never lost a basketball game as badly as that day. They definitely put us in our place, and when I think back on that game, I always have to laugh.

Dan Williams - January 05, 2016 at 09:13 PM

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“ 55 files added to the album LifeTributes



Rill Chapel's Life Tribute Center - January 05, 2016 at 06:48 PM

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“ roxanne is following this tribute.

roxanne - January 05, 2016 at 12:13 AM

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“ Stuart Scott said, “Just because you die doesn’t mean you lose to cancer. You beat cancer by how you live, why you live, and in the manner in which you live. You fight and when you get too tired to fight you lay down and let someone else fight for you.” On December 17th my Dad ended his fight against Cancer. When he got too tired to fight his wife and his kids and his grandkids took on his fight. He is now in Heaven with his parents, his in-laws, his sister in law and a son he last new as an infant. This year he celebrated Christmas in Heaven. Love you Dad.

I don’t have any standout memories of Dad but I do have some lasting moments that I will always remember. My biggest memory that I have of Dad is playing football with us in the back yard. Luckily in most places we lived we had a big back yard. We started out just me, Mark and my Dad but always ended up with the neighbor kids joining in and we would have full on tackle football with Dad being the designated quarterback for both teams. How awesome is that? As a parent in my thirties I had a lot going on and don’t know how my Dad could squeeze that much time in to play football with us. To us it seemed like all day, but in reality it was probably only a couple hours or until someone got hurt. As I got older we played a little basketball and a lot of golf together but nothing was like throwing the pigskin around.

I’m not sure how I got into scouting, I think my brother Mark was in so I must have just followed along. I went up the line from Cub Scouts to Webelos and then to Boy Scouts. I wasn’t sure I wanted to stay in the Boy Scouts, I wasn’t having a lot of fun and I don’t even know if I told my Dad that but next thing I know he joined as a Scout Master. It was cool but at the same time not cool as you couldn’t goof around. We went on a lot of hikes and a lot of campouts and there was just something special about having your Dad there.

When we moved to Port Orchard a lot of our weekends were spent hiking and backpacking in the Olympics and occasionally at Mt. Rainier. Dad didn’t go to REI and buy the latest and greatest equipment, not sure where he got his camping stuff but we had the essentials. We all had backpacks, sleeping bags and tents. As we began to work we ended up buying our own backpacking gear to at least get in the current decade. When I was fifteen he asked me to go for a week long trip up to Mt. Rose in the Olympics. It was a steep climb and it took us a couple days to get up there then we hung out for a couple of days, hiking and taking pictures. On the way down every camping area seemed like a mosquito and fly haven so I kept suggesting we get a little lower. Well, 15 miles later we were off the mountain. It turned out my Dad broke his heel from all that walking and that ended his backpacking and started his camper collection.

My Dad was always there and always made time for his family. Whether it be for his kids or grandkids. He was always teaching, always nurturing, always willing to give a hand. He grew up in a different era but somehow was always able to connect with the newer generations. He instilled hard work in all his kids and even his grandkids. It was always important to work, not necessarily for the money but for the responsibility. I don’t know how he found the time to make for us back then but I’m sure glad he did.



“ I’m the last and youngest child and dad always said that once he figured out what was causing it he put a stop to it. I think dad thought that since I was youngest that I somehow missed out on the things my older brothers got to do. I didn’t. When there was work to be done around the house my job usually consisted of only watching but for some reason I still had to do it. I never understood that growing up. What was the point of that? It wasn’t until I had my own children that I began to realize that raising them involved a lot of watching. Because I was the youngest, my own children were also the youngest grandchildren. If I had ever missed out on things with my dad growing up, my children certainly didn’t. We’ve always lived just a few minutes apart and my children got to experience many adventures with their grandpa. They could tell you about all the camping and fishing trips they enjoyed over the years. I did miss out on a lot of time with my own grandpa because he passed away when I was young and we didn’t live close but I know my children always had their grandpa’s attention. My two boys were glued to grandpa but it was my daughter that had her grandpa’s heart and he made sure she knew that.

I can think of many times in my life that I went to my dad to ask for advice or if I didn’t ask he would somehow know I needed it anyway. When my wife and I were new parents my dad was always available and made many house calls with his medical bag in hand. We didn’t know what we were doing but dad was always able to make us feel like we did or at least that we would be able to figure it out. Later, when I became a new homeowner, dad was always there for any projects that came up. Instead of a medical bag, he would bring along a tool belt. What I enjoyed most about those times wasn’t getting the job done but just the talks we’d have. I learned about life growing up on the farm or the things he learned from his own dad. Or his time spent in Viet Nam and what it was like being there and coming back home. I never really had to ask about these things, they just sort of came out during our time together. There was only really one thing I wanted to know about but was too afraid to ask and that was about my older brother Scott who died as an infant. I’ll never forget that time just about 3 years ago standing in my driveway. It was not long after my wife’s younger brother had passed away. Dad had stopped by and while we talked about life he began to tell me about my brother. We stood there crying and hugging and must have been quite a site for the people driving past. I may have missed out on some things growing up but I experienced so much life as well. It was during the last few years that I enjoyed our time the most. For my whole life I was the one that needed help and advice but in the last few years dad began to call me and ask for mine. There’s nothing better than being able to give back to your own dad when he’s been doing all the giving since the day you were born. I would trade away a million other things for those cherished times. I miss you dad. - Kevin

Kevin LaCombe - January 04, 2016 at 06:46 PM