



Ronald Evan Lewis

February 4, 1945 - July 7, 2019

“If I were giving a young man advice as to how he might succeed in life, I would say to him, pick out a good father and mother, and begin life in Ohio.”
Wilbur Wright

Ron Lewis succeeded in life.

From his birth in Akron, Ohio to incredible parents, until his untimely death, Ron lived well in every sense of that word. He was blessed with family, friends, talent, opportunity and passions.

Ron was the oldest of Irene and Evan Lewis' four children. From his early youth he was interested in auto sports. In fact, he won his first racing trophy at the age of twelve at the Soap Box Derby in a car that he and his dad built.

Ron's dream was to be a car engineer but this dream was cruelly smashed at Purdue when he learned that there was no such thing as a “car engineer” and he would have to be a “shock absorber nut” engineer if he wanted to work in the auto industry. Nevertheless, he graduated from Purdue in 1968 with a

degree in mechanical engineering and a position with Sunstrand, an aerospace company in Rockford, IL.

In 1971, Ron joined The Toro Company as a project engineer and relocated to Minneapolis. This was a life-changing decision, moving his career into new and exciting areas. Impressed with Ron, Toro management encouraged him to take a leave of absence to obtain his MBA at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth. At Tuck, Ron honed his management and strategic planning skills. Equally important, he broadened his horizons and made strong friendships that lasted his lifetime. After his Tuck graduation in 1974, Ron returned to Toro, quickly moving to general management positions in the International Division. After traveling the world with Toro International, Ron took the position of Vice President, Business Development with DataCard in 1980.

By 1984, Ron could no longer deny his entrepreneurial gene. He and a partner embarked on a venture of buying, rebuilding and selling small businesses, with Ron handling the operations. He identified, ran, served as CEO and eventually sold a good number of these companies. The venture was a financial and strategic success for all concerned. In 1997, Ron became President and COO of Fieldworks, a computer start-up. Finally, he decided he had taken enough business risk, admitted that he was retired from business, but never retired from his avocation.

Wherever his career took him, Ron never neglected his true passion – auto sports. He traded his beloved Corvette for a Porsche 911 and joined Nord Stern, the local Porsche club. A good friend wrote to Nord Stern members upon Ron's death, "I know many of you, like me, have known Ron for years as a Porsche aficionado, Concours participant, DE enthusiast, driving instructor and racing coach as well as a club racer. If it had anything to do with

Porsches, Ron was there.”

Ron was an excellent driver, winning trophies and awards with great regularity. In 2007, Ron indulged in his dream and acquired a GT3 Cup car (designated race car for the uninitiated!). He went club racing for two years at tracks in the upper Midwest. He did well and had a wonderful time. However, coaching two close friends and outstanding drivers to national podium finishes was the pride and joy of his racing career.

Ron had yet another passion, his 37-year marriage to Nikki. Ron and Nikki married in 1982 and proceeded to live a truly rich and loving life together. They traveled widely -- trips to Egypt and China were favorites. But at heart, they loved the beautiful home they created and enhanced over the years. Ron enjoyed all the fun – and none of the work – of Nikki’s involvement in cultural activities and entertaining. They built strong friendships and together made a good life.

Ron had a gift for friendship. He was kind, gracious, eloquent, intelligent and just fun to be with. He retained friends from every phase of his life and cared deeply about the people around him. Ron served as a Deacon and on the Strategic Plan Committee at Plymouth Congregational Church and was a member of several professional organizations.

Ron considered himself a happy and lucky man, accepting his diagnosis of glioblastoma and death with grace and dignity. He will be sorely missed.

Ron is survived by his wife, Nikki, brothers Clifford (Anette) and Norman, and sister Elaine Jackson as well as niece Emily Lewis and nephews Justin (Sarah) and Geoffrey White.

A memorial service will be held to honor Ron's life, Friday August 16, 10:30 AM at Plymouth Congregational Church. The family suggests memorials to the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth or VocalEssence.

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Edina Chapel 952-920-3996