

Louis Leotta Jr. 1934 - 2020

Louis Leotta, Jr., retired History professor at St. Bonaventure University and former department head, passed away suddenly on Wednesday (February 26, 2020) shortly after arrival at Olean General Hospital.

Born July 9, 1934 in Lawrence, MA he was the son of Louis L. and Mary Oca Leotta, Sr. He was first married to Marline Garnett for 18 years. They divorced in 1979. On April 3, 1982 at the First Baptist Church in Olean he married Lois M. Wixson who survives. (Note : Lois passed also in 2022)

Dr. Leotta was raised in Malden, MA. His life changed when he lost his sight at the age of 15. He was directed to Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts, and thus began a life of guide dog assistance. He received his undergraduate degree at Colby College in Maine and later earned his master's and Ph.D. at Columbia University.

He taught American History for 34 years, starting with Fairleigh Dickinson University and later at Rutgers University, both in New Jersey. He later taught at New Hampshire University. He spent most of his career at St. Bonaventure University where he held the position of chair of the history department and, in 2001, was named a professor emeritus.

His wife Lois was a crucial part of his success at teaching. He relied on her assistance in correcting student's papers, and in reading textbooks to him, and on her being of help in so many other ways. It was she who worked alongside him at their land and country home in Humphrey for several years while he cleared trees and transformed their property. They also enjoyed traveling.

Dr. Leotta is the author of many historical publications including a recognized book on the American Social Security system entitled, "Abraham Epstein and the Movement for Old Age". Dr. Leotta also had a deep interest in the Vietnam War and the Corporate American history upon which subject he taught extensive curriculum. The whole St. Bonaventure community meant the world to him and he was beloved by many, especially his many students over the years. He was well known and appreciated for his lively and engaging style in the classroom.

Dr. Leotta was also active on the Allegany School Board and Board of Assessment Review. He was an avid jazz and audiophile enthusiast. He also enjoyed outdoor activities, land management and he read extensively using the Kurzweil reading machine for the blind.

Dr. Louis had a wonderful sense of humor and enjoyed taking long walks in the country with his family and his guide dogs. The accomplishments of his life are credit to his personal values of courage, perseverance, hard work, and triumph over adversity.

Louis was also a wonderful conversationalist and was always ready engage in a spirited exchange on varied topics from history and politics to technology. He was a wonderful teacher both in and out of the classroom. Dr. Louis Leotta Jr. was a deeply loved patriarch of his family and will be

missed very, very much.

In addition to his wife he is survived by a son Anthony (Stacy) Leotta of Charlotte, NC and their children Garret and Alison; a daughter Nancy (Charles) Lewis of Boston, MA and their daughter Veronica; 2 sisters Jeanne Tassinari of Harwich, MA and Carol MacKendrick of Lynnfield, MA; several nieces and nephews; 4 stepchildren Robert Dingman of Gowanda, Andy Dingman of Florida, Christopher Dingman of Titusville, PA and Brian Dingman of Land 'O Lakes, FL and many step grandchildren and a step great grandchild.

Friends will be received today (Friday March 6, 2020) from 4-5pm at the Casey, Halwig & Hartle Funeral Home, 3128 W. State Rd. Olean. A service will begin at 5pm in the funeral home. All are welcome to attend.

Memorials, if desired, may be made to St. Bonaventure University or to The Seeing Eye, Washington Valley Road • P.O. Box 375 Morristown, NJ 07963-0375.

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