



Donald J. Luke

December 13, 1933 - January 18, 2014

Donald J. Luke of East Hampton, formerly of New Britain, loving husband of Patricia Brenn Luke, died peacefully Saturday at Hartford Hospital. He was born in New Britain on December 13, 1933, the son of Joseph J. Luke and Ann Michaels Luke. A veteran of the US Army, he graduated from Central Connecticut State University in 1955 and went on to his graduate studies at CCSU, the University of Notre Dame and the University of Virginia. While an undergraduate at CCSU, he was an outstanding member of the track, cross country and football teams. He was the track team's top scorer and established a school record in the mile and also set a school record for points scored in the decathlon. He participated in the 1952 U.S. Olympic Trials in the decathlon. In 1955 he received the Frederick Gladstone Award for outstanding male student-athlete. He was inducted into the Central Connecticut State University Athletic Hall of Fame in 1988. An outstanding teacher of Chemistry and Physics, he spent his entire career at Cromwell High School where he also coached track and field.

He leaves to celebrate his life and mourn his passing, his wife Patricia, his daughter, Melanie Luke and her husband Gary Barrett of St. Augustine, FL; his daughter Ivy S. Luke of East Hampton; his son, Richard B. Luke of East Hampton; his granddaughter, Taylor E. Luke of East Hampton; a sister, Eileen Nolan and her husband Robert of Naples, FL; step grandsons; great granddaughters; and many nieces, nephews, cousins and dear friends.

At Donald's request, there will be no calling hours and a private interment and graveside service will be held at the convenience of the family at Brooklyn CT South Cemetery. The Carlson Funeral Home, New Britain is assisting the family with arrangements. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, 10 Brookline Place West, 6th Floor, Brookline, MA 02445-7226 or the CCSU Foundation Inc, 1615 Stanley Street, New Britain, CT 06050-4010 or to the Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation, 230 East Ohio Street, Suite 304, Chicago, IL 60611. Please share a memory or note of sympathy with Donald's family by clicking on "Send Condolences" at the bottom of this page.

Tribute Wall

DS

“ *Mr. Luke was a great man. He always led the class with a great smile. He was a great man that kept the kids happy. I liked that we had him for science. While in science, our class made a green house that was there to grow plants and flowers. We had a great time and I will always remember him waiting for us in the class room. Great man and a wonderful leader. Thank you Mr. Luke,*”

David Schwartz - September 20, 2016 at 12:01 AM

DS

“ *Mr. Luke was my teacher and mentor in high school. We had so many good times in class and the class loved the pipe he smoked. Mr. Luke taught us how to make Dandelion Wine and how to grow vegetables and fruits in a greenhouse. I am saddened that he is gone. Mr Luke will never be forgotten by me. I pray for him and his family. RIP Sir!*”

David Schwartz - September 20, 2016 at 12:01 AM

DH

“ *Don Luke has always been an inspiration in my life. I thoroughly enjoyed his quick and salient focus on that which other would choose to discuss with him. He was always supportive, insightful, and could be counted on to provide us with a challenge to find our best efforts.*

My sympathy for his family and friends.

Dr. George Hache' - September 20, 2016 at 12:01 AM

CM

“ To the family of Donald Luke, I am so sorry to hear of Mr. Luke's passing. He was a wonderful person and a fantastic teacher. I was a student of his at Cromwell High School Class of 1968, a female in a class of all males and his teachings influenced my life in many ways. He will always be "Mr. Luke" even though we met in town many times over the years, and I am a grownup with a grown child , and he requested it , I could never call him Donald. He commanded too much respect from his students and asked that we did our best. His challenges to all his students allowed me to pursue a career in computers when that was "a man's world" in the 1970's. He will be missed. My prayers are with you all at this time. As always Carol Mandigo

Carol Deming Mandigo - September 20, 2016 at 12:01 AM

AL

“ I knew Don for many years through coaching. He was always energetic, enthusiastic and humble. I would often meet him in Stop and Shop where we would talk about old times, former athletes and shared memories. I will never forget his spaghetti sauce and his special hot dogs.He would make spaghetti and sauce for all the coaches at the COC pre-track meeting. I will always remember him dearly. Special condolences to Rich whom I have also coached with for many years.

Arnie Liscombe

Arnold Liscombe - September 20, 2016 at 12:01 AM

VG

“ I am sorry for your lost,he was a good man.I had him has a teacher. may god be with you all.

Veronica Gee - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

P1

“ In chemistry class, I had rudely turned my head and was whispering with the person beside me. Mr. Luke silently picked up a felt chalkboard eraser and tossed it. It flew the 25 feet and bonked me right on the noggin.

In the gym prior to basketball practice, we had set up a makeshift high jump pit using floor mats as a landing area. Mr. Luke happened by. He quietly removed his shoes and socks and laid his suit jacket neatly aside. He then easily cleared over 6 feet in his dress pants, shirt and tie, and bare feet. He re-dressed, grinned impishly, and left.

Respect. Humility. Mr. Luke imparted two valuable life lessons to me without ever having said a word.

"An outstanding teacher..." Yes, indeed.

Peter Carlin, CHS 1966 - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MT

“ Don taught me many things none of which was more important than to live life to the fullest and embrace being busy and involved. To the adviser of "Fun Club" God Bless.

Mary LaMonica Tobias - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

AP

“ Don was a gentleman and a scholar. I'm sure his loss is profound to the family he often spoke of with a great love.

Ann Perzan - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

B1

“ To all the Luke family: Our class of 1959 was "The Class". He started with us as freshman - us new to high school - & he just starting his teaching career - 1955 - September! He wore those spit-polished "bomber" shoes - crew cut - shirt and tie always & READY TO TEACH! He came to class with a smile, a challenge and confidence that he passed on to us - we thought we were smart! Most of us had him for some kind of science for at least 3 years - never bored. I saw him at our reunions and at West Side Market - always the same. We were so lucky to have had him in those formative years. My sincerest sympathy to you all - he will be missed.

Barbara Adams Spada - Class of 1959 - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

PH

“ My sincere sympathy to you, Pat, and all Don's family. I have enjoyed knowing Don, especially at family gatherings when I was able to chat with him. He was a great man and shared many interesting stories.

Peg Hoffman - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

ND

“ I was one of Mr Luke's students many years ago, Class of 1972. Everyone loved his classes. He was one of those "special" teacher that made learning fun
RIP

Nancy Distefano - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

JP

“ My deepest condolences to Don's family. And on behalf of all our Alumni Members we will miss Don more than words can express. Please take care during this very sad time. Jim Patten CCSU Class of 1967 and currently Vice-President, CCSU Track and Cross Country Alumni

James S. Patten - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

DJ

“ My condolences to your family. Mr. Luke was my chemistry teacher and track coach at CHS! He had such a big personality and there so many "Lukisms" that we his students will always remember.

Deborah Jones - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

SV

“ Dear Pat and family, I am so sorry that you have lost a loved one . We go way back and I can recall all of the good times we have had together. There are no words to accurately express my sympathy to all of you. As there were no words when I lost Ray. Take care of each other. Family around is a good and wonderful help. Sincerely Sue

Sue Venberg - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

CM

“ With very fond thoughts and strong prayers, my family and I wish to extend our deepest condolences to the Luke family.

For me, to this day, Mr. Luke remains a very vivid memory, in the classroom, as a coach, and as a faculty member.

Carl M. CHS 1978

Carl Morton - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

C7

“ I loved having Mr. Luke as my chemistry teacher. I didn't think that I would like chemistry but Mr. Luke made it fun and interesting. I truly enjoyed the class.

Cathy - Lee Deming Rizza Class of 71 - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

RA

“ Our family is very sorry to hear that my cousin Donald has passed on. I know that it is very difficult to comfort those who have lost a loved one because that father, husband, brother and inlaw is always a very meaningful part of his familie's core values and lives. Perhaps the best that we can do is focus on the memory of all the good things that this rich and long lfe has meant to all those lucky enough to be close to such a good and constructive individual. Always remember the good that Don Luke brought into the world and trust that what we believe eternity holds for each of us is what God intends. Our sorrow and prayers are with you.

Roger Arcand - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

JS

“ I got to know Mr. Luke as a member of the track team before I took his Chemistry class. He was very motivating, and always ran with us in practice. It seemed there was nothing he couldn't do, and usually better than the rest of us. Since I was not a very good athelete, but I enjoyed being part of the team, he gave me the opportunity to be the correspondent to the Middletown Press and Hartford Courant. After each meet, I would call in the results. I continued to practice, and enjoyed staying in shape. He also made Chemistry a fun subject! I'm so glad he attended all of our CHS All-Class Reunions, especially the most recent one in 2013.

John Swingen - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

PP

“ I am so honored to have had Mr. Luke as my teacher. He was the kindest, most patient teacher. His stories will live on forever. So happy I saw him this past summer at the reunion. We had some laughs and he shared some of his "secret" recipes with my mom and I.

*RIP MR. LUKE
CHS class of '89*

Pam Waters Porter - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

P9

“ My sincere condolences go to the Luke family. Mr. Luke was not only my chemistry teacher, but my track coach. I learned a lot from him. I had the honor of knowing this man and he helped me to be a better athlete. To Rich, between you and your father... I learned quite a bit. God speed Mr. Luke. We will miss you and you will always be our Mr. Holland's Opus!!!

Peter Omicioli Class 95' - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

BG

“ Mr. Luke was my Chemistry teacher. It was his love and excitement for chemistry which sparked my passion for science. Because of him, I now teach chemistry to high school students and work in the field of nutrition. I will never forget his energy in class and his handstands on the benches!

Beth Grose - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

LN

“ MY DEEPEST SYMPATHY MELANIE AND GARY AND YOUR FAMILY!!! YOUR FATHER WAS A GREAT MAN I HOPE WHEN YOU REMEMBER ALL THE GOOD TIMES WITH YOUR DAD IT WILL BRING A BIG SMILE TO YOUR FACE!! SO VERY SORRY MELANIE MY THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS ARE WITH YOU NOW AND BIG HUGS!!!

LAURA NIEWINSKI - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

TD

“ *I remember him as a great teacher, track coach and friend. When I went to college the first two semesters of chemistry were easy thanks to Don.*

Please accept my heartfelt sympathy.

Tom Daly - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

JS

“ *We were so shocked and saddened to hear the news of our loss of Cousin Donald. He was always such an inspiration to us all- especially the young people- and so thoughtful and considerate to all of the family. He will be greatly missed.*

Jeanne Arcand Snell - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

JS

“ *We were so shocked and saddened to hear the news of our loss of Cousin Donald. He was always such an inspiration to us all- especially the young people- and so thoughtful and considerate to all of the family. He will be greatly missed.*

Jeanne Arcand Snell - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

SP

“ *Mr. Luke will be fondly remembered by many of his students as a teacher who brought enthusiasm and excitement into the classroom. More importantly, he was a man who expressed his views without ambiguity. May his family find joy in having been part of his life. Our prayers and thoughts are with you. Sal & Sally Petrella*

Salvatore J. Petrella - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MW

“ *Mr. Luke was a great teacher! You either loved him or hated but anyone who got to know him loved and respected him. He taught my dad, who graduated in 1964. I graduated in 1987. Our sincere condolences.*

Michelle Macri Will - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MB

“ *To the best teacher I ever had. Still use the things he taught me 20 years ago in chemistry class and on the track. This is one student that is going to truly miss him. So sorry for your loss, he was/is a great man.*

melissa blowers - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

KL

“ *He had unconventional flair & knew how the mile was run. I got to see him twice in the last year & a half. I 'll always remember what he wrote in my yearbook "May you continue to run all the races of your life."*

Kim Libera - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

DN

“ I had Don for 8th grade science his first year teaching, I think and HS chemistry but remember him best as my track coach. He could beat anyone on the team at any event. He took a personal interest in my college plans and I still remember some "life lessons" that I learned from him.

I am very glad that we had the chance to catch up at the all-school reunions in 2009 and 2013. He is one of the highlight memories of my high school years.

Condolences to his family and loved ones.

Dick Nixon - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

PP

“ I was a custodian,for C.H.S.When Mr. luke saw me allway's used to talk to me and make me laugh,He was a true teacher,with a lot of love,Forever in my Heart.R.I.P. Patricia Piotrowski

Patricia Piotrowski - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

JK

“ My sincere condolences to the entire family. The Blue Devil track family lost another team member.
God Speed

John Keleher - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

BC

“ My deepest sympathies to Donalds family. I was one of his many students. He was my parents and my sisters' teacher also. He was a good teacher, he made chemistry fun. He was a good man and will be missed. He was a Cromwell High Legend. It was nice to see him at this years All Schools reunion. I'm happy I went. May he rest in peace.

Bonita Caso - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

BS

“ One of my favorite teachers of all time. I was in awe of him as my track coach and could only wish to do my best for him. I still remember the chemistry experiments with esters. We about ran everybody out of the school. His memory will stay with me always. For his family prayers and condolences for your loss.

Beckham Smith - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

GW

“ Few teachers could connect with their students like Don Luke. I was lucky to have him as a teacher a few times as well as a track coach and he certainly left his mark on us. My thoughts and prayers for the family, know that we are thinking of all of you.

Grant Westerson - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

AA

“ *To Mr Luke's Family;
I was very sad to hear the passing of Mr Luke. Mrs Luke my deepest condolences to you and your family.
I enjoyed having Mr luke as a teacher , he was a good teacher and after all those years always remembered all his students names.
Sincerely,
Tony Amenta
Class of 1966*

Anthony Amenta - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

DO

“ *I was born and raised in New Britain. From 1950 I lived very close by AW Stanley Park and spent my summers there very happily playing ball and swimming at that great old pool with all those rafts and "the island." Don was a lifeguard there and a hero to all us kids as a friend and a star football halfback at NB State Teachers College. Many of us never missed a home game at Arute Field on Wells Street. Don always had time for us kids and was one of my early role models. I can still recall seeing him running like the wind barefoot from one lifeguard station to the next, what a fine athlete he was and what a great guy. I went on to a great career in the law and recently retired as judge of probate and children's court judge in Willimantic. So sorry to learn of Don's passing. I am not at all surprised to read about what a great life he led after he left our mutual boyhood home of Enbee, a great place to grow up in those days. My sincerest sympathy to Don's family. I have never forgotten Don Luke and those great days at Stanley Park and Arute Field and I surely never will. . . .*

Dennis O'Brien - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

KL

“ I will always remember Mr. Luke because he was unconventional & had a good sense of humor. He was quite the scholar & I thank him for his vote when I got Athlete of the Year. He was one of my first track coaches & showed me how to run the mile. As a chemist, he illustrated the usefulness of The Periodic Table & just how much information can be obtained from it. To this day, I keep one on my wall. I will miss him.

Kim Libera - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

AM

“ Dear Patricia, I remember with great fondness my encounters with both you and Don. It was with much sadness that I learned of his death. May his memory be for a blessing.

Abraham Bernstein MD - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

SB

“ Dear Pat & Family,
So sorry to hear of Don's passing. As I plant my garden this spring, I will fondly remember our spirited conversations on "how to grow the best tomato"! He was so good to my mom and was her favorite. May your memories warm you in this difficult time. Cousin Shelly

Shelly Barnett - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

CS

“ My prayers go out to his Wife, and Family. He was a awesome teacher, and will be missed.

cynthia smith st.paul - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MI

“ *Pat & family*
My deepest sympathy at this difficult time. My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family.
Muriel lorli

Muriel lorli - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

JB

“ *Mr. Luke was an awesome teacher, he was probably a bit out of the box for that time period. I wish to offer his family my sincerest sympathies and prayers. Know that he made a difference.*

Jackie Bonafonte - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

NJ

“ *MELANIE, I AM SO VERY SORRY ABOUT THE PASSING OF YOUR FATHER. I JUST LOST MY FATHER BACK IN AUGUST. IT IS DIFFICULT AND WILL TAKE TIME TO HEAL BUT REMEMBER HE IS NOW IN HEAVEN AND NOT IN ANY PAIN. OUR PRAYERS ARE WITH YOU, GARY, YOUR MOTHER AND THE REST OF YOUR FAMILY. WE WILL SAY A SPECIAL PRAYER FOR YOUR FATHER.*

*WITH ALL OUR LOVE,
NICK & NORMA CIANCI*

NICHOLAS M CIANCI JR - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

HP

“ *I smile at the many memories I have of Mr Luke, my High School chemistry teacher. My thoughts and prayers are with you.*

Heather Fogg Pramuka - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

SC

“ I am so glad that I got to see and talk to Don at this past reunion. I got to hear a few more of his stories and to thank him for not killing me for starting a fire in the Chem lab with hot charcoal. Please accept my heartfelt sympathy for the passing of a true teacher.

Susan Butler Czaja - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

SM

“ My condolences go out to the Luke family. I was a student of his for three years at CHS. I have many memories of his classes and views on life.

Sandra Milardo - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

JG

*“ Aunt Pat, Mel, Richard and Ivy and your families, I am so very sorry about Uncle Don. My very deepest sympathy to you all. He was such a wonderful character and a good man!
With love*

Jeannie Grenier - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

DB

“ Very sorry to hear another great teacher has passed. He was one unforgettable guy. It was nice to see him at the reunion last year.

Dianne Brainerd - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

EM

*“ Many fond memories of our classes at CHS, our thoughts and prayers to all of you.
CHS '71, '72*

Evelyn Paddock McIntyre and Jim McIntyre - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

VT

“ I'm so sorry to hear of Mr. Luke's passing. He was a wonderful teacher who will be remembered for his creative teaching, funny stories and passion for life! I imagine there are students all over CT telling their children stories about him tonight as they learn of his passing. May you all find peace in your memories.

Valerie May Triblets - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

LS

“ Mr. Luke was my science teacher at CHS. He really challenged us, made us work hard but had a great heart. I used to love the stories he told us. RIP Mr. Luke. Leanne Swan, '95

Leanne Swan - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

AW

“ Donald Luke was a well loved teacher. I am saddened by his passing. He had a unique way of making learning and life fun and exciting. Rest in peace Mr Luke.

Alvin Wagner - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

KG

“ Our thoughts are with you.. My husband and I are both former students of Mr. Luke and saw him often in East Hampton where we live now... he will be greatly missed and always in our thought as one of the best teacher we ever had.

Kimberly & Geoffrey Goodson - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

NP

“ *Im sorry for your loss but I know heaven has gained an angel. Mr. Luke was my favorite teacher ever! I always talk about him with my kids. I took his classes all four years at Cromwell High. Im sad but smile when I think if him, God bless. He will be missed. :-*

Nady Padin - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MW

“ *Made science fun!! R.I.P. Mr Luke! Forever in our hearts!*

Michelle Wasik - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

KG

“ *I had Mr. Luke as a student at Cromwell High. He was so full of life, a very smart man with an amazing ability to handle students. His famous phrase of kids "swapping spit" in the hallways was such a riot and has stuck in my memories after all these years. He truly made his mark in the world by being such an amazing mentor and teacher to so many young people.*

Kimberly Goebel - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

KE

“ *My thoughts & prayers go out to you Luke Family~I have fond memories of Mr. Luke as my chemistry teacher~Always so amusing:- A great teacher and veteran to this country~Blessings to you all in this time of sorrow*

Kristene Gagnon Estes

Kristene Gagnon Estes - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MG

“ I am so sorry for your loss. I graduated Cromwell High in '95. Mr. Luke made chemistry interesting and fun. He was so great to us. I am back in school for nursing now and his chem lessons paid off. 19 years after graduating and it's coming back to me. Only because I had such an amazing teacher. My deepest condolences. Michelle Goodwill

Michelle Goodwill - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

KK

“ Great inspiring teacher.

Kelly King - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

KK

“ Great inspiring teacher.

Kelly King - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MG

“ Don passionately taught and coached I Cromwell High School. I had the privilege of being his student in the classroom and athlete on the track. He was a visionary, an extraordinary man who will be dearly missed by his family and friends. Thank you for the memories. I will never forget you.

Matthew Gaughran - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

SO

“ One of my favorite teachers at CHS. My thoughts and prayers to his family.

Samantha Owen - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MJ

“ *I had Mr. Luke at CHS and he was a great teacher. It was really good seeing him at the CHS All-School reunions the past couple of years. RIP Mr. Luke.*

melissa Jarvis - September 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM