

Obituaries

Ray Allen Powers

July 22, 1938 – June 16, 2016

Ray Allen Powers died on June 16 at Anna's Home in Sisters after a six-year struggle with Parkinson's and Lewy Body Disease.

Ray was born in Phoenix, Arizona, to Josephine and Ralph Powers. The family moved to Medford, Oregon, when he was 11 years old. He attended Griffin Creek Grade School.

Ray graduated from Eagle Point High School in 1958, after having served in the Naval Reserve since 1956. His active duty began in 1958. He was discharged from the Navy in 1960.

Ray began working construction in Medford after his

discharge. He also painted billboards and commercial signs for Dick Walsh, who later developed an art school in Ashland. He began selling real estate in Medford, where he also began doing remodels of homes to sell. He also worked for Blake, Moffitt and Towne Paper Company as a sales representative until 1980.

"He was a heck of a salesman," said his wife, Katie. "A born seller."

In 1974, Ray moved to Corvallis. There, he met Katie Wilson, whom he married in 1976. They remained married for the rest of his life. In the six years of his dementia, Ray always remembered: Pointing to his wedding ring to tell anyone near, "October

17, 1976," the day he married his true love.

The couple bought Duedall-Pots office supply in Albany in 1980. It became a commercial and retail business that they sold in 1994, when they purchased land in Central Oregon. They moved to the Sisters home he built "from the ground up" in 1995.

The Powers began Affordable Window Coverings in 1999, which they continued until Ray was unable to do the construction because of the Lewy Body dementia. He always worked in some manner. Work was his hobby.

Ray did a tremendous amount of volunteer work in Kiwanis and Sisters. He

and Katie fostered infant animals until they were ready for adoption and also were regular volunteers at the Food Bank. In his shop, Ray and other Kiwanians assembled the Kiwanis memorial benches that are seen all over Sisters.

He is probably mostly remembered driving his 1932 five-window Ford coupe wearing his "Mr. Briggs" baseball cap. He and his Ford were featured in an article in a hot-rod magazine.

He is survived by his wife, Katie; daughter, Julie (from a previous marriage); granddaughter, Kellee and sister, Bertie Hass.

A celebration of life will be held late in the summer. The family requests



contributions to Partners in Care, 2075 N.E. Wyatt Ct., Bend, OR, 97702 or OHSU Lewy Body Research, where Ray and Katie agreed to donate his brain for study. Katie wishes to thank Absolute Serenity and Ashley for their care of Ray in Anna's Home.

Ronald Aaron Leis

May 22, 1936 – June 18, 2016

Know this: a great deal of the life of this man is a mystery even to his family. No child or wife or relation knows his story beyond the part they played themselves and what stories they can remember. It's not that he was closed about what he had lived and done, simply that it's too much for anyone to know, too strange to know whether to take seriously and now lost to the world. In the days, weeks, months and years to come, his family will try to untangle and piece together all that they know of him, to trace a line from birth to death, to understand what drove him from point A to point B, but all their efforts can only ever amount to a fraction of the reality that was Ronald Aaron Leis. Though 80 years is a short time to live compared with many who have gone before him, if the sum of a person's life is truly greater than its constituent parts; Ronald Leis' life extended an order of magnitude beyond what most people will ever experience.

Born in Saginaw, Michigan, Ron grew up in a poor household with three brothers and a sister. He distinguished himself academically in high school and exhibited great creativity, participating in drama, painting and anything that created something from nothing. When he graduated high school he went to Capital University earning a degree in art, then on to the University of Michigan where he earned a masters degree in sculpture.

Ron's great passion was art, in particular the many forms of sculpture, from glass-blowing and wrought metal to woodwork and clay, of which the latter two

would ultimately come to define his life. He may have been described as counter-culture when seen creating art installations at Woodstock or working alongside glass-blowers to form molten creations, but he was ever true to himself and his borders were rigid. Uninfluenced by others he had no interest in drugs or political revolution but remained Ron and moved forward, driven by unseen currents that only he felt. People's paths intersected with and diverged from his, and by the time he had left Michigan and was living in Florida he had two daughters, Ginger and Debbie; and two sons, Aaron and Britt. Incidentally he had also had two wives by this point; Merle and Phillis.

Having grown up with little, Ron knew both how to get by on meager means and, as is rare amongst people, recognized the price of wealth and the trappings of life; rather than being additive he saw that to pursue them would cost him his passion. Eschewing the well-worn path, he followed Frost into the forest and wandered until the oaks and elms turned to juniper and pine and the mountains rose on the horizon. Leaving his life in Florida, teaching as a professor of art at the University of Miami, he purchased an old fire-engine and loaded Aaron and his belongings onto it. "I wanted to see the mountains," he would later say, so he left Florida and drove west with no intended destination until his fire-engine broke down in the town of Sisters, Oregon and he decided it was a sign that was where he was supposed to be. That was 1974.

Ron built his life with his hands in this town. He rented a storefront and opened a pottery and began

to create. Some of his work was abstract, some utile, all of it touched by his art. Here he met a woman who would become his third wife, Heidi; they bought a small, yellow house in town and built it into a pottery with a storefront on the east side and the household on the west side. Behind the house he ran pipes and propane burners and stacked bricks to build a kiln that would support his art and his family for years to come. In this house four of his children; Amber, Micah, Laura and Crystal, would be born, midwived by a woman who would one day own a bakery next door. They were born in the same room from which he would ultimately slip the surly bonds of this life.

Time passed and the town of Sisters grew around the small yellow house, transforming empty lots into auto-parts stores and pizzerias. Businesses came and went but the kiln still glowed red at night and still he made his art.

It was in this house that he found the basis for his faith as a Christian. Ask a typical Christian why they're a Christian and they'll tell you that's how they were raised. Ask Ron why he was a Christian and he'd tell you about cursing at God during a rainstorm that was making his roof leak and at the peak of his cursing when he yelled at God "You think you're so great? I could do a better job than you!" God responded with an almighty flash of lightning and thunder that rocked the house. He found God on his knees beneath a leaking roof that didn't seem like such a big problem after all.

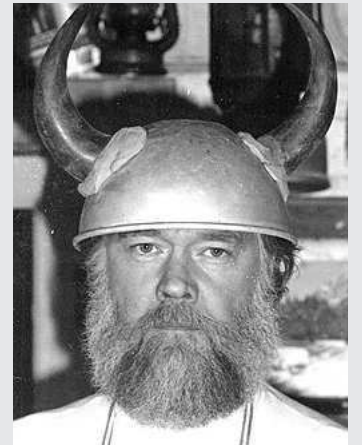
He became a pastor after that and for the next several years led a congregation of churchgoers who unabashedly dug into what God and

faith meant and how it related to them in the world. In the end, when his mind was ravaged by Alzheimer's disease, when he was unable to articulate simple questions or answers, Ron's last holdout was his ability to pray. He'd be damned before he lost his connection to God.

If art was his passion in life, greater still was his passion for his children, the eight he fathered and the two still to join his life's tapestry. Once more he found himself unmarried and making pottery in the town of Sisters and once more a path crossed his which would wind itself about his thread until the end of his mortal days; his fourth and final wife, Shawn. She brought with her two children who he would love as much as his own, Justin and Nicole. Ten children all told; a nice, even number.

Much of his later years were spent remodeling a green-colored house, trying to build a space large enough to house his family of eight. He tackled this challenge with his two hands and wrestled with it for years as winters came early and caught the house with the roof open, wreaking havoc on the structure. As the house was taken down to the foundation and built from the bottom up he fought with those two hands without a care for anything else. As one by one his children grew and left the nest he worked to complete the house. Though two grew and left before it was completed, taking flight from the small yellow house, the remainder called the green house home and it served its purpose until the youngest set out to challenge the world. Then it was lost.

In the end, banks and notices taken into account, Ron found himself back in that small, yellow house, in



the town of Sisters, Oregon, where he had broken down in his fire engine all those years ago. The town he felt ordained to live in. In some deep, inexplicable way, he and that house were entwined, and that he should take his final breath there is appropriate. Nobody who loved him would have had it any other way, nor would he.

Ron, my dad, was a good man. He loved many and judged few. He opened that small yellow house to vagrants who needed a place to sleep, friends in need and family near and far and somehow it embodied all that he was. He lived his life freely like no one else I have ever known. He was never drunk or violent and though he wrestled with his own demons he loved his family more than his own life. No man leaves this life sinless, but as he goes now to meet the God he has loved so faithfully for so long I know that he will be welcome. His Father will smile at him and say "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

We are indebted to Partners in Care Hospice for the support they gave Ron and our family during the last part of his journey. Memorial contributions in Ron's name can be made at www.partnersbend.org.

A memorial service will be held in a few months.