



Rev. Aldon Elwood Purdham Sr.

December 28, 1928 - July 1, 2014

CAPTAIN Aldon "Al" Elwood Purdham, Sr. (USN Retired), age 85, of Salisbury, passed away on Tuesday, July 1, 2014, at the Veterans Affairs Hospice House.

Al was born December 28, 1928, in Shenandoah, VA, the son of the late Carvey and Lena Purdham.

Al graduated from Shenandoah High School and then attended Roanoke College in Roanoke, Virginia, before transferring to Lenoir-Rhyne University, in Hickory, North Carolina, where he received a Bachelor of Arts in English. He subsequently received a Master in Divinity from the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina. After being ordained as a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Al successfully developed a mission church in Portsmouth, Virginia, named Communion Lutheran Church, and another in San Diego, California, named Shepherd by the Sea Lutheran Church. It was then that Al joined the United States Navy Chaplains Corps.

For the next twenty-six years, Al served in eleven assignments around the world, including three tours supporting the US Marine Corps, one of which was in Vietnam; deployments on a destroyer and aircraft carrier; and locations in Alaska, California, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Virginia. His US Navy career culminated as the Chief of Chaplains for Camp Pendleton, California,

where he oversaw twelve chapels, supporting thousands of Marines at one of the largest bases in the US Marine Corps. While on active duty, CAPTAIN Purdham also received a Master of Education and Education Specialty from the University of Virginia. In the Navy, he was awarded the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star with Combat "V", Navy Commendation Medal with two gold stars and numerous other unit commendations.

Upon retirement from the Navy, Al returned to his roots as a Lutheran pastor, helping to start two more Lutheran churches in Virginia and North Carolina and rejuvenate two more in the same states. While it was an honor for him to serve in these capacities, he most appreciated and enjoyed his roles as a son, brother, father, father-in-law, grandfather, and friend to so many he loved dearly.

Preceding him in death in addition to his parents is his wife, Elizabeth "Betty" Mae Purdham, and sisters, Colleen Gordon, Norma Dennis and Joyce Foreman.

Those left to cherish his memories are his daughter, Marilyn Bollinger (Rev. Craig) of Charlotte, NC; son, Aldon Elwood Purdham, Jr. (Lauralyn) of Colorado Springs, CO; sister, Shirley Nash; grandchildren, Sonia, Steven and Sarah Bollinger and Jordan, Delaney, Lindsey and Sydney Purdham; and many loving nieces and nephews.

Service: 1:00 PM, Thursday, July 3, at St. John's Lutheran Church in Salisbury, NC, conducted by Rev. Rhodes Woolly.

Burial: 10:00 AM, Friday, July 4, at Mt. Nebo Lutheran Church, Rochelle, VA.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to a church, charity or school of donor's choice.

Cemetery Details

Mt. Nebo Lutheran Church

Rochelle, VA

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JUL 3. 1:00 PM (ET)

St. John's Lutheran Church
200 W. Innes St.
Salisbury, NC 28144

Graveside Service

JUL 4. 10:00 AM (ET)

Mt. Nebo Lutheran Church
Rochelle, VA

Tribute Wall

LE

“Marilyn and Aldon and all your family, God gave and God has taken home His gift of love and life in your dad, Aldon who I've known all my life as Elwood. I knew that Al and Betty Mae were always special people that June 1962 through today. They always had a "special glow" when together. God's love was that glow. Al gave to so many and his wonderful love of God was this gift. Marilyn like others, I was not surprised with your phone call yesterday but I am saddened by his death. Al, or Elwood, was a loved man by God and Betty Mae especially. His many years of work (and gardening) are now completed and blessed Al is at rest. He was sad at the loss of Betty Mae and now they are together in God's garden (Paradise). This is my comfort when I picture them together and that they are "home with our loving God".
May they rest in peace eternal, Amen.
Linda L. Evans, Apple Valley, California

Linda L. Evans - July 09, 2014 at 12:18 PM

NA

“May you find comfort and peace during this time. Your parents visited our community church St. Paul in Shenandoah often and shared stories of his youth there in Grove Hill and with my father and his family. He started a scholarship fund at our church for a person to pursue their calling as a Lutheran Minister. His picture is in our church social hall as a reminder that good things happen to good people. We will keep your family in our prayers. Natalie Shuler Rinaca and family

natalie - July 02, 2014 at 12:55 PM

GP

“ I was saddened to read this morning of the death of my dear student and friend, Al. I knew him for several years at the YMCA but had no idea of his varied and impressive background and accomplishments. We have all missed his warm presence in class and always knew he was someone I could count on to both appreciate my teaching and in particular, anything new I might bring to our exercise endeavors. I continually took the challenge and tried to find some twist or innovation to share with the class as Al never failed to notice any small change I made in our routine and would always express his thanks. For a number of Christmases I received a thoughtful written message from Al in his painstakingly beautiful script -- accompanied by the biggest pecans I had ever seen and a wonderful fruitcake banana bread from Betty, his wife. Even as I know I will miss Al even more now that he is returned to his Maker, I am so grateful to have known him and I rejoice in the life of the man I was fortunate enough to know as student and call a friend.

Gail Poulton

Gail Poulton - July 02, 2014 at 10:48 AM

BW

“ Dear Aldon and Marilyn,
May our Lord give you and your families peace and comfort. I am so sorry that you have lost your father, so soon after your mother. This was not a shock to me. Two weeks before your mother our dear Betty passed away I last spoke to them by phone and your dad said to me when one spouse dies the other doesn't last much longer. He had so many health issues but above all his heart was broken. I could see it at your mother's service at Mt. Nebo.
Your dad and my forever pastor was one of the greatest inspirations in my life. He baptized me, became my pastor and my forever friend. I once told him he was the wind beneath my wings. My life will never be the same without my Pastor Al and Betty in it but how blessed I was that God brought them into my life and the wonderful memories I have of them.
I want you to know the last words I said to your dad at your mother's graveside service. I put both my hands on his face and slowly lifted his face. I will forever love you and Betty and I know I will never see you on this earth again but I will surely see you in heaven. Thank God for him and heaven is a much sweeter place with both of them there. You had two wonderful parents and they will live on in your lives for they instilled what is right and perfect our Lord.
God bless you and your families,
Brenda Weakley St. Luke, Stanley, Va.

Brenda Weakley - July 01, 2014 at 10:00 PM

BC

Dear Alton and Marilyn,
I am just learning of the passing of Betty and Al. So sorry I did not know until now. You and the family have my deepest Sympathy and God Bless you and the family.

The Bobby Carson family.

Betty jean Carson - December 10, 2014 at 10:34 AM