



## Leonard Holmes Sullivan

April 18, 1933 - July 23, 2022

### Leonard Sullivan

MOORESVILLE - A mule named Callie fell on Leonard Sullivan when he was a young man. By most accounts, he could have been killed and he should have been seriously injured. But as it turned out, the incident was just one of many factors cementing his determination that life on the farm would not be his fate.

Born into a tenant-farming family in rural Beaufort County on April 18, 1933, Leonard attended school in Bath - North Carolina's oldest town - and was voted best looking in his graduating class. A tribute he always credited, in the self-deprecating and humorous way that truly reflected his character, to some pretty slim pickin's in that particular place at that particular time.

In the years that followed, he served in the U.S. Army, but never really identified himself as a veteran because he felt that honor should be reserved for more devoted service personnel and, as his oldest son explained, Leonard believed the Army and the G.I. Bill did much more for him than he ever did for the Army.

He played baseball at East Carolina, married his high school sweetheart - Lou

Ellen Brooks - and started a family, and eventually attended the University of North Carolina earning a degree in journalism.

While working not far from his roots in eastern North Carolina, Leonard got a call from Mooresville Tribune publisher and editor Tom McKnight and, in 1960 - in a move most folks around Bath considered a journey to the far-off West - with two sons in tow and another on the way, the Sullivans moved to Mooresville.

For the next 30-plus years, as a reporter, then editor and later as a partner with J.D. Chamberlain in what became a multi-generation Tribune operation, Leonard invested himself and his family in their adopted community. In the process, he inherited McKnight's role as the writer of a syndicated, folksy weekly column - called "Uncle Dan from Doolie" in the Tribune, but localized to reference other crossroads, trading posts or country stores with cracker barrel conversations when it ran for years in dozens of community newspapers from West Virginia to Montana.

He was a people person, a great storyteller and he loved jokes. He cherished words, the power they carry and the magic feeling of creating the exact appropriate phrase - like what he considered the best sentence (with some family relevance understood) ever written: The "Shut up, he explained" in a Ring Lardner short story about a father's response when his son asked, "Are we lost?"

He admired all styles of writing, from the Bible to Kurt Vonnegut, and into his late 70s would dissect articles in The Economist and have passages underlined and points to emphasize scribbled off to the side in preparation for a challenging discussion with anyone who dared to answer, "Have you read this?"

Several years ago, Alzheimer's began eroding pieces of his personality, but there were still moments. He'd often share that his favorite gravestone quote was "I knew this was coming, but not this soon" and even in the later stages of the disease well into his 80s, when playfully advised to "behave himself" around his nurses, he'd reply, "What choice do I have?"

Leonard, the son of Theodore Rayfield Sullivan and Hilda Virginia Waters Sullivan, died at his home in Mooresville on Saturday, July 23, at 89. He was predeceased by his parents, his wife, and his older brother, William Earl Sullivan.

He is survived by his sons Leonard H. "Lynnie" Sullivan Jr. and wife Deborah of Cary; Larry K. Sullivan and wife Tammie; and Lee Sullivan, all of Mooresville; sisters Sybil Leary and husband Curt of Cary, and Anna Ruth Cox and husband Wayne of Washington, N.C.; and brothers George Sullivan and wife Linda, and Ray Sullivan and wife Elisabeth, all of Washington, N.C.

Grandchildren are Mary Elizabeth Smith (Daniel) of Cary; Timothy Sullivan (Lauren) of Mooresville; Leonard H. "Trey" Sullivan III of Cary; Theodore Sullivan (Stephanie) of Cary; Jenna Lynn Sullivan of Mooresville; and Braelyn Raye Sullivan of Charlotte. Great-grandchildren are Maizlyn Sullivan of Cary, Landon Sullivan of Mooresville and Mary-Kinsley Smith of Cary.

Services will be held Saturday, July 30, at Cavin-Cook Funeral Home & Crematory in Mooresville. Visitation will begin at 1 p.m. and a memorial service will be held at 2. Inurnment will follow at a later date at Salisbury National Cemetery.

For those who are unable to attend the service, you may go to the following link for the live stream <https://view.oneroomstreaming.com/authorise.php?k=1>

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The family wants to extend heartfelt thanks to the Jenlei's agency for providing home care and friendship for nearly three years.

Memorials may be made to Fieldstone Presbyterian Church, 804 Fieldstone Road, Mooresville, NC 28115 and Hospice & Palliative Care of Iredell County, 1325 Mecklenburg Hwy., Mooresville NC 28115.

Cavin-Cook Funeral Home & Crematory, Mooresville, is serving the family of Mr. Sullivan. Condolences may be made to the Sullivan family at [www.cavin-cook.com](http://www.cavin-cook.com).

# Previous Events

## Receiving Friends

JUL 30. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Cavin-Cook Funeral Home  
494 E. Plaza Drive  
 Mooresville, NC 28115

## Memorial Service

JUL 30. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Cavin-Cook Chapel  
494 E. Plaza Drive  
 Mooresville, NC 28115

# Tribute Wall



“ *Cavin-Cook Funeral Home & Crematory created a Webcast in memory of Leonard Holmes Sullivan*



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**Cavin-Cook Funeral Home & Crematory** - July 28, 2022 at 06:21 PM

GA

“ *Gail,Dawn,Christina,Bobby,Honey,Denise purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Leonard Holmes Sullivan.*



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**Gail,Dawn,Christina,Bobby,Honey,Denise** - July 30, 2022 at 07:33 AM

EH

“ *Eric, LeAnna, and Claire Holmes purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Leonard Holmes Sullivan.*



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**Eric, LeAnna, and Claire Holmes** - July 28, 2022 at 09:15 PM



“ *Beverly Holt lit a candle in memory of Leonard Holmes Sullivan*



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**Beverly Holt** - July 27, 2022 at 05:04 PM

BL

“ *Larry and family, as a kid growing up in Mooresville, I remember getting the paper each week and seeing the list of people involved with the Tribune. His name always stuck out. He was a talented writer and it showed. To the family, I have seen the devastation that comes with Dementia and Alzheimer's. It can be very painful to watch. All I can tell you from personal experiences is God will always be there when you need him. Larry, I have seen some of your writings over the years and you have his gift as well. Prayers to the family.*

*Barry Luffman*

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**Barry J. Luffman** - July 27, 2022 at 11:56 AM

JM

“ I met Len Sullivan when I was a student in Mooresville. He selected me to pose for a Halloween photo with 3 of my fellow classmates. Over many years, we would share a chuckle about the start of my "Professional Career."

About 35 years later at a Town of Mooresville event he spoke to me and called me Judy. Since I've never used that nickname, I smiled and corrected him and said it's Judith. He said well excuse me JU-DITH !!

We shared a good laugh and from that time on when we met, he would say Hello- JU-DITH and I would say "so nice to see you LEON-ARD !!

Len Sullivan was a special gift to the world.  
Charming, funny, intelligent, and articulate are words especially suited to describe him. The world is a sadder place now that he is gone !!  
RIP...LEON-ARD !!  
JU-DITH Carrigan McLean

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Judith Carrigan McLean - July 27, 2022 at 11:27 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Leonard Holmes Sullivan.



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July 26, 2022 at 09:10 PM

EL

“ Len and his wife Lou were both blessings to take care of!! Never a dull moment lol!! Len and I joked alot and one day i was talking to another caregiver about how you can tell he was very intelligent before Alzheimer's took over and he busted out laughing and said you just don't know me lol! We laughed alot together but in his last few weeks I cried alot! R.I.P Buddy aka Pappy

Erica Lineberger - July 26, 2022 at 04:54 PM

JS

Yes we will definitely miss our Mr.Len he was a light with his smile and his songs he would sing. He was always so kind and appreciative for everything. I want to personally thank the Sullivan family for trusting in Jenleis to care for such a jewel. RIP my friend until we meet again.

Jennifer C Small - July 26, 2022 at 07:29 PM

NM

“ Praying for the family, he was one of Mooresville's treasures, he sure will be missed.



Ned and Sandy Mills - July 26, 2022 at 12:41 PM



“ Beverly Holt lit a candle in memory of Leonard Holmes Sullivan



Beverly Holt - July 25, 2022 at 03:21 PM

CJ

“ *Cindy Jacobs lit a candle in memory of  
Leonard Holmes Sullivan*



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**Cindy Jacobs** - July 24, 2022 at 03:33 PM