



# Merle Garth Ladd

JUL 2, 1941 - MAY 13, 2024



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# Merle Garth Ladd

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**M**erle Garth Ladd, 82 of Tallahassee, Florida entered into rest on Monday, May 13th, 2024.

Merle was born July 2, 1941 in North Syracuse, New York to Allan Douglas Ladd and Edith Emma (Eby) Ladd. His family relocated to St Petersburg Florida when he was 8 and he remained a resident there until he graduated from Northeast High School in 1959 and joined the United States Air Force.

While enlisted Merle completed basic training at Lackland AFB, San Antonio, TX, completed Ground Radio Relay Maintenance (microwave) technical training at Keesler AFB, Biloxi, MS in 1960. He was assigned to the 1958th AFCS Squadron, Anderson AFV, Guam from 1960-1961 and assigned to Communication Squadron, Minot AFC, Minot, ND from 1962 – 1964. He earned the rank of Airman 1st Class before he was honorably discharged in 1964.

He married the love of his life, Patricia Lee Carroll on March 2, 1963. They were married for 51 years before she preceded him in death on November 2, 2014.

Merle was employed by Control Data Corporations as a computer technician in 1964. After completing 11 months of technical training in Minneapolis, MN, he transferred to the Manned Spacecraft Center (later Johnson Space Center), in Clear Lake, TX (1964-1965). He maintained mainframe computer systems supporting the Mercury Project. He was promoted and transferred to the Cape Canaveral Air Force State (Cape Kennedy, 1965-1974). Engineer in charge of the multiple mainframe computer systems at the Real Time Computing Facility, Air Force Eastern Test Range, Cape Canaveral. These systems were responsible for providing range safety during launches and for tracking spacecraft while in orbit. The systems computed radar data during the launch phase to determine if the rocket was on course, if not provided data for the decision to destroy the missile. In the early days this was a frequent occurrence.

Merle was promoted to Engineering Services branch manager and transferred to Rockville, MSD 1974-1984. He managed several computer technicians that provided maintenance services for



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computer systems in the Washington DC area. He transferred to Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida (1984 to 1988) to support the installation and maintenance of the first class 7 super computer. This was the most powerful mainframed computer system that existed. The central processors were immersed in liquid nitrogen. He accepted an early retirement after 24 years in 1988.

In 1988, Merle started a new career as the 9-1-1 Systems Manager for Leon County Division of Emergency Management. In 1999, the 9-1-1 and Emergency Management functions were transferred to the Leon County Sheriff's Office. He developed and implemented one of the first digital mapping systems utilized with 9-1-1 systems to assist in locating emergency callers. He retired after 16 years, from the Leon County Sheriff's Office on June 1, 2004.

Merle lived a rich and diverse life. From delving deep into genealogy to jet-setting around the US collecting casino chips, he had a multitude of passions that kept life interesting. His dedication to tracing the Ladd family lineage speaks to his love of history and connection to his roots. He loved to take cruises, exploring tropical paradises and rugged wilderness alike such as the Bahamas, Mexico and Alaska.

Flying was clearly another one of Merle's passions, owning not just one but two aircraft. His Cherokee Piper and Ultralight Quicksilver MX must have given him a sense of freedom and exhilaration every time he took to the skies. And his commitment to serving his community through the Rockledge Volunteer Police Department and the Lake Jackson Volunteer Fire Department shows his selflessness and dedication to helping others. It's evident that Merle lived life to the fullest, embracing every opportunity for adventure and connection along the way.

Merle certainly knew how to make a statement with his style. His leather top hat was more than just an accessory; it was practically a conversation piece. And paired with his distinctive signature, he left a lasting impression wherever he went. Merle's unique look always turned heads and sparked curiosity.

Merle is survived by his son, Michael Ladd (Gert) of Tallahassee, Florida and daughter, Sandy Holmstrom (Jeff) of Cresco, Iowa as well as 6 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren and his best friend for the past 11 years, Tinker Bell.



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Merle's memorial service is scheduled for Saturday, May 25, 2024 at 9:00 A.M. at the Tallahassee National Cemetery, 5015 Apalachee Parkway, Tallahassee, 32311.



## Tribute Wall

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PH

**Pamela Howard** lit a candle in honor of Merle.



May 21 at 3:49 PM

CO

**Carol Owens** posted:

Uncle Merle was a compassionate, loving person. He always made me smile. I have enjoyed visiting with him on the phone and will miss being able to talk with him about genealogy. He loved his family and spoke fondly of them. I will miss his comforting presence.

May 21 at 1:40 PM

DQ

**Dawn Eby Quast** October 7 at 10:57 AM

I worked with Merle on the genealogy of his mother's branch of the Eby family and was very pleased when he came to Prince Rupert to visit me when he took an Alaska cruise. RIP Merle.

BR

**Bobby Ryon** May 21 at 2:48 PM

Merle, I am a better man for having shared some of my life with you!



# **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Merle by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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