



John R. "Rick" Ontko

JUN 8, 1954 - MAY 10, 2022



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John R. "Rick" Ontko

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John Richard “Rick” Ontko was born in Uniontown, PA, and grew up in Alexandria, VA. After graduating from TC Williams High School, he became a Heating & Air Conditioning technician. Rick met Ellen Fleitz in 1989 and married her in 1991. They settled in Woodbridge, VA. Rick worked for Keenan, ARS and Arlington Heating & Air in Northern Virginia for 25 years. Rick and Ellen loved taking family and friends on their boat out on the Potomac River to fish or go tubing. Rick also loved going on motorcycle rides especially with friends from the Knights of Columbus, representing them in the July 4th Parade. He also was an avid bowler and enjoyed being on league teams.

Rick loved his parents. He admired his father, John (“Gabby”) who taught him how to work with tools and woodworking skills. He regularly helped his mother, Vera, after his father passed, anyway he could—with house or yard projects, running errands, or just visiting. He loved visiting his mother and sister, Roxann, on weekends when still in Virginia. He always had time to call her up to chat. Sadly, Vera passed away earlier this year at the age of 101.

Rick became a Catholic in 1998. He became active in the Knights of Columbus in Woodbridge and Manassas, VA, becoming a Grand Knight. He enjoyed the festivals at Sacred Heart and often helped with the food booths for the carnivals as well as helping run the bingo night. While at St Joseph’s in Lakeland, he played the Elf at the Breakfast with Santa and helped with the Food Pantry.

Before leaving Woodbridge, Rick enjoyed spending time helping his nephew at his music business in Alexandria and visiting with his niece’s growing family as they were stationed around DC. He loved having barbeques at his house for Ellen’s siblings in Virginia. He also had a good time hosting one of his nephews for two years in Woodbridge. He enjoyed helping with Ellen’s sister on her townhouse projects as well as Halloween parties. He loved travelling north to visit cousins in Uniontown, PA, and south to visit Ellen’s brother and his family in Lakeland, Florida.



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He enjoyed many car trips over the years to Niagara Falls, Cooperstown, Gloucester, deep sea fishing trips where he caught shark. Most importantly, between illnesses, they made it to Disney World many times over the past few years.

Rick and Ellen eventually moved to Lakeland, Florida in 2015, after his initial cancer diagnosis. Rick loved his new neighborhood often cooking and baking for his neighbors, helping them with house projects, and just socializing. He loved being part of the Huntington Hills community, grateful for the friendships of those closest to him. Beyond his neighborhood, he loved attending many of the shows at Harrison School for the Arts and the Lakeland Community Theatre. And at home, Rick and Ellen couldn't get enough of Midsomer Murders and NCIS on TV.

Rick also loved all their dogs over the years: Casey first, then Pepper and Gabby together, and today, Abby. He also generously volunteered taking care of other family dogs over the years even allowing one to sleep on his head in bed. Miss Abby will surely miss the golf cart rides Rick took with her.

Finally, Rick was a "cancer warrior." For eight years, he persevered through multiple types of cancer and knee issues, and always stayed optimistic. Ellen will miss his presence at home while she works remotely, not just seeing him during her break time and lunch but will miss and be forever thankful for the meals he prepared for her, everything he taught her, and the love he gave her. His and their love was so generous and heartfelt as many around them recognized. Ellen cared for him deeply. Rick was an amazing, wonderful, and giving husband, brother, uncle, in-law, and friend to all he knew.

Rick is survived by his wife, Ellen Ontko of Lakeland; sister Roxann Patrick of Alexandria, VA; niece Shannon (Ned) Sullivan and their children Jack, Elie and Joe, of Argyle, TX; nephew John Patrick (Ellen) and their daughter Mera of Alexandria, VA; brother-in-law Patrick (Teresa) Fleitz and their children: nephew Robert Fleitz (Kristis Auznieks) of Riga, Latvia, niece Claire Fleitz (Mitchell List) of New York NY, and nephews Carl Fleitz and Dennis Fleitz of Lakeland; sister-in-law Michelle Fleitz (Larry Holzman) of Rockville, MD; sister-in-law Colleen Sellers (John Berry) of New York, NY; brother-in-law Bill (Lilia) Fleitz and nephew Willie of Prince Frederick, MD; many cousins and extended families in Uniontown and the Northeast; and very special friends Gloria (mother of Teresa); Mike and Scott; and all of his much loved neighbors in Huntington Hills and Virginia. You know who you are.



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The visitation and funeral will be on Saturday, May 21st at St. Anthony's Catholic Church in Lakeland. The Visitation will begin at 10am. The Mass of Christian Burial will begin at 11am. There will be a eulogy that precedes the mass. The burial will follow the Mass at Serenity Gardens at Gentry-Morrison Funeral Home, 3350 Mall Hill Dr.

Flowers should be sent to Gentry-Morrison Funeral Home (visit their website for information to order). Also, donations can be made in his name to Poodle & Pooch Rescue (<https://poodleandpoochrescue.org>) or Lakeland Community Theatre (<http://www.lakelandcommunitytheatre.com>).

The service will be live-streamed. Those who are unable to attend in person may tune in and watch the service live at <https://saintacc.com/church-web-cam-1>

Check back here later for reception details, more information to come once finalized.



Events

John R. "Rick" Ontko

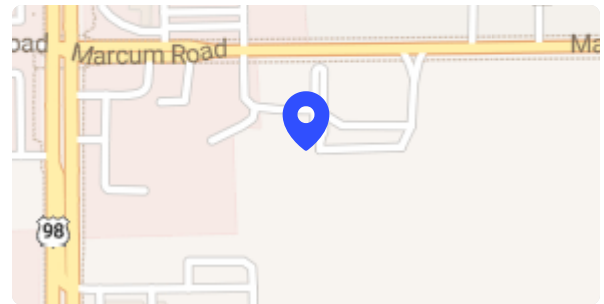
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Visitation

Saturday, May 21, 2022

10:00 AM - 11:00 AM ET

St. Anthony's Catholic Church
820 Marcum Road, Lakeland FL

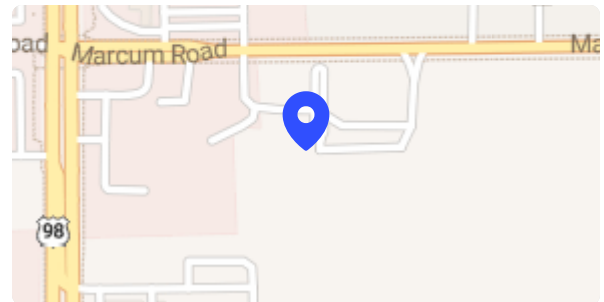


Funeral Mass

Saturday, May 21, 2022

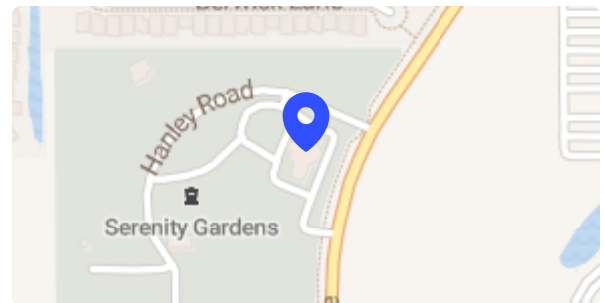
11:00 AM ET

St. Anthony's Catholic Church
820 Marcum Road, Lakeland FL



Cemetery Details

Serenity Gardens
3350 Mall Hill Drive, Lakeland FL 33810





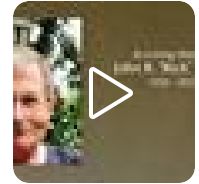
Tribute Wall

John R. "Rick" Ontko

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Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes shared a **Video**.



May 20 at 6:18 AM



Anonymous sent a Full Of Love Bouquet to the Ontko family.



May 19 at 6:11 PM



Anonymous sent an Enchanted Cottage to the Ontko family.



May 19 at 7:54 AM



NB

Nelson & Bobbie posted:

Our condolences to Ellen and the Ontko & Fleitz families on the passing of Rick.

May 18 at 10:15 AM



TO

The Family Of Ellen Ontko sent a Beautiful in Blue to the Ontko family.



May 18 at 9:00 AM



Anonymous sent an Arrive in Style to the Ontko family.



May 17 at 9:29 AM



Tribute Wall

John R. "Rick" Ontko

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MF

Michelle Fleitz shared an album called **Rick Ontko Media**.



May 12 at 5:38 PM

DE

Debbie posted:

A friend of Michelle's, I've heard about Rick for many years. His strength and tenacity was inspirational! Sending lots of love to all of the family.

May 14 at 3:20 PM



Anonymous sent an Ocean Breeze Spray to the Ontko family.



May 13 at 8:50 AM

JU

Julie posted:

Amazing memories with Rick at all our Halloween parties over the years. He was always up for any adventure - and helping us configure decorations and schemes. I also have a wonderful memory of him staying over at Michelle's house one weekend to watch our dogs (all three of them!) and upon our return, just confounded that they all insisted on sleeping in the bed, and that the cocker, Photon, was on the top of his head the entire night. So many wonderful and fun memories. Love always, Julie & Eric

May 13 at 5:47 AM

RB

Rose Backus posted:

Rick was a great friend and a nice gentleman to work with. One of the best volunteers that I ever worked with. God has another angel.

May 12 at 5:38 PM



Media

John R. "Rick" Ontko

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Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes shared a **Video**.

May 20 at 6:18 AM





Media

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Michelle Fleitz shared 5 photos to the **Rick Ontko Media** album.

May 17 at 5:35 AM



Ellen and Rick for Oktoberfest



Media

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Rick and Abby



Rick and Ellen with her siblings



Teresa, Rick and Ellen squaring off



Rick, Vera, Roxann



Memories only last if you share them

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



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