



## April Joy Leask

June 24, 2021

April Leask (Notaras, Nycz), 80, passed away peacefully in her home with her son at her side on June 24, 2021.

She was born to George and Joyce Notaras in Wenatchee, Washington on April 25, 1941. April grew up in Soap Lake, WA and was one of 7 seven children. She was in the first class to graduate from Soap Lake High School.

April was preceded in death by her parents; Husbands Dick Nycz and Wally Leask, brothers David Monte and Tony Notaras; sister Marina Romary (Notaras). Stepson Steve Leask. Nephews Raymond(Lauren) Granillo and Andy(Dena) Notaras, and her niece Nicole Notaras.

She is survived by her son Duane Nycz, sisters Freida Sebok (Notaras) and Joyce (Jim) Conklin (Notaras) and her brother Nick Notaras . Daughters through marriage Connie Lambert (Larry), Cathy Harrison and Janie Leask and her stepson-in-laws Larry Lambert and Greg (Mary Ann) Nycz and daughters-in-law Tanya(Dale) Elliot and Libby(Steve) Leask. Numerous nieces, nephews, step-grandchildren and step-greatgrandchildren and her "since birth" best friend Ella Joe Snyder(York)

Growing up in a large happy family in Soap Lake Washington April was good at sports like Volleyball and Softball. She worked as a car hop at the A&W. She was always proud to have been the Suds and Sun Princess of Soap Lake in 1958. After she graduated from

High School she married the first love of her life, Dick (Richard) Nycz who was an airman stationed nearby at Larson Airforce base in Moses Lake, WA. They spent the first year of their marriage in Soap Lake, but when Richard got out of the service they moved to his hometown of Streator Illinois with their son Duane. There she worked at being a great mother and housewife as well as working as a waitress at the Fireside Cafe. Her husband, Dick worked at Owens Illinois Glass Factory. They had many great memories of her time spent in Streator with Dick's side of the family.

In the winter of 1965 April and Dick moved to Marengo, IL where Dick worked for the Chrysler Corporation and April worked for Arnold Engineering. April was always a worker. Shortly after she started working there she noticed a few of the big bosses were watching her. She asked if she was doing something wrong and they said no...we have never seen anyone do this job so well before. Needless to say she easily kept her job there for many years. That was how she was at any job that she had throughout her lifetime.

During her time in Marengo, April was a great mother and wife. She always volunteered to chaperone her son's school field trips and attended many other functions. Her house was an open door to her son's friends. Hungry kids could always get a meal. On a hot summer day, she would haul a carload to the local swimming hole Griebel's Beach and on a cold winter day to the Multi-plex theater 25 miles away. She would arm those kids with their own candy and popcorn to keep in their coats. She would often bring her son home to a triple decker Dagwood Sandwich and a bowl of homemade soup.

Her life in Marengo was a good one. She loved their house on Forest Street, but in time her husband developed kidney disease. During that time April got her drivers license at 30 years old and learned how to run a kidney dialysis machine in her home. She took fantastic care of Dick for several years until he passed away from the disease in 1976.

Her sister Joyce lived in Chicago with her husband Jim and daughter Nina. Joyce wrote of the good times from many visits to Marengo: Shake-a-day at the Taverns (with Duane & Nina sitting at the bar!), Italian Beef Sandwiches, falling asleep on the floor while the roast

cooked, badminton in the backyard, April & me sitting on the porch in the storm "watching" cause it was a "Tornado Watch", Spaghetti Sandwiches, Nina & April finding 'Lilies of the Alley'. . . and so much more! Seems like it was a just a couple years ago!

After an already full life, April decided to move back home to Soap Lake, WA where she had a job working for her sister Marina Romary at Don's Restaurant and the Soap Lake Businessmen's Club both well known establishments in the State of Washington. She tended bar at first but eventually she was in the kitchen full time with her mother and sister. April became a great cook and worked in the business for 40+ years where she earned a reputation for her great soups, home cooking, Greek Cuisine, quick wit, hard work, happy heart and contagious smile.

Life continued for April and she met the second true love of her life, Wally Leask . . .

Wally had a fishing boat and kids with kids so she got to have grandchildren. April worked with Wally for three summers on his fishing boat in Metlakatla, Alaska where they worked hard and had fun and ate a lot of fresh crab and salmon.

Wally had played on Seattle's first professional basketball team. April was always proud of helping put together Wally's 75th birthday party where many formerly well-known basketball players attended.

April had a great time with Wally and their children both at home and traveling. They had many weekend gatherings, family dinners and trips together. They visited Arizona, Hawaii, Las Vegas, Alaska and Florida. There were many meals fixed by her at her house where all sides of the family attended. Everyone loved April's cooking.

They worked hard in the yard with Wally's daughter and son-in-law Connie and Larry Lambert making it a showpiece. They were even awarded 'yard of the month'!

Wally passed away in 2004 and April missed him dearly but carried on. As with the rest of her life April still loved and worked at putting together family parties on or near holidays, loved a card game - Pinochle, Cribbage, Poker and others, loved a trip to the local Casino or better yet Las Vegas and just loved to travel in general. She loved her many road trips with her son Duane to see the great scenery of the Pacific Northwest and ALWAYS to try a different interesting restaurant along the way.

April loved the rock canyon walls of the Coulee north of Soap Lake. She ALWAYS commented while going through them. Even when she couldn't speak very well, she pointed and smiled. A piece of her heart will be there forever.

April took great care of her mother in her final years. Making sure she had plenty of company, things to do, great food and just knowing that she was loved. Her mother passed away at 93 in 2005. 2005 was a hard year for her.

April continued to work in the kitchen of Don's restaurant with her sister Marina for the next several years making great soups, Greek Cuisine, and 'Damn Good' home cooking. She would show up for work and in a blink of an eye there were several pots on the stove and pans in the oven. She put on many large banquets for various occasions. No matter how good she was at it, she was always nervous about how everything would turn out.

Over the years April helped many people who were shut-ins or having hard times. Stories come now, long after, about the things she did for people without a need for recognition....she just did it. Always a giver and a helper, many a shut-in and lonely, hungry hospital or nursing home patient received her love.

In her later years April could be found at the Soap Lake Businessmen's Club on Saturday nights dancing to the live music of Bonnie Guitar and making sure the band had that special coffee cup with some Blackberry Brandy.

Despite her busy life April always had time for her son Duane and was a great mother as long she was able with her recipes, her wisdom, her sage advice, her help and her love. The had a very special relationship through their years.

Dementia crept into the last 6+ years of her life - some bits and pieces left and some stayed. Her beautiful smile was the last to go and will be forever missed my many.

Donations to the Alzheimer's foundation in April's name can be made at <https://act.alz.org/site/Donation>

# Comments

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“ What a beautifully written tribute you wrote for your mom. April and Marina both made us feel so welcomed into their "home" at Don's where it always felt like home. We would spend 2 to 3 weeks every summer in Soap Lake and ate at Don's several nights of our times there - I think I still know the menu by heart. The food was always fantastic as was the company. We always were a large table of grandparents, parents, kids and cousins. Loved getting to know April, Marina and so many others that worked there year to year. They put so much love in the food. I miss all those times there with family and all the great memories that April and Marina helped us to create. Thinking of you all at this time.

**Robin Dichter Zambrowsky** - July 07 at 09:24 PM

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“ I have very fond memories of April. Working at Don's Restaurant in Soap Lake. She was a smart dresser and was always beautiful in anything she wore. I loved her smile and her laugh. She was always so nice to me and everyone she came in contact with. She will be greatly missed. Oh the things her and Marina must be planning already up in heaven. Look down on us and look after us dear ladies. Until we meet again.

**bea stearns** - July 07 at 09:58 AM

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“ I was one of those Marengo kids in and out of the Nycz house all the time. Duane, you mom was one of the best.

Joe Buehler.

**joe buehler** - July 07 at 08:15 AM

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“ April was a treasure in every sense of the word. It is a beautiful tribute that her son wrote with so many wonderful memories shared. I remember her interview when producing the documentary on Soap Lake. She was funny and she knew how to share a story in a way that you thought you were in it. She could bring you into her life with her smile - by that I mean her true character was like a light that she spread like butter over all those she loved and cared about. You knew you were with someone when you were with April because she gave you back some piece of herself with each encounter - I don't know how she did that - I just know those are the best words I can use to describe what it was like being around her. She had a strong voice and an inner expression that meant every word she said - I think it was her voice that felt big - she had a range of bass in her voice that could engage you with her story, or just pass on some simple bit of information and it all felt important. I loved her soups. One time I asked her about a soup recipe and she noted that the most important ingredient was LOVE. I can't tell you how many times I have quoted her. It also gave me pause to reflect on my own work, my own footprint in life and I realized the truth of what she said and I worked even harder at adding LOVE to the work I did. She, along with her sister Marina had a huge impact on my life. These were strong, hard-working women who understood the importance of family and community. They buckled down and did whatever job there was set before them and they did it with Joie. There will never be another April - Yes, she was a treasure and I will never forget her. I am grateful to have been a part of her life.

**Kathleen Kiefer** - July 07 at 01:16 AM

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“ April worked hard to contribute so much to Soap Lake's new high school. She was full of school spirit and fun to be around with her outgoing personality and laughter. 1958-59 was a very special time in my life and April was a part of that. Seeing her in later years at school reunions always brought back happy memories.

**Betty Helms Schlicting** - July 03 at 12:42 PM



“ I worked with April for many years. She was a coworker and a friend. Fun to be around and a person who really cared about you. She offered me good advice on many occasions always there to lift you up. I have many fond memories of April what a blessing to have known her.

**Dawn** - July 07 at 01:12 AM