

Robert Sheridan

1940 - 2021



Robert Sheridan, age 80, of Townsend, DE, passed away peacefully on Thursday, October 7, 2021, surrounded by his loving family.

Born in Hoboken, NJ on October 11, 1940, he was a son of the late Philip Michael and May Ann (Miller) Sheridan. Robert graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a B.A. in Geology from Rutgers University in 1962. He went on to receive his M.A. and Ph.D in marine geophysics from Columbia University in 1965 and 1968, respectively. Robert married the love of his life, Karen McCauley, in 1966.

He was proud to have served in 1968 on a U.S. Navy ice-breaker research ship as a private contractor in charge of geophysical surveys around Antarctica, for which he received the Antarctica Service Medal from the U.S. Navy. Later, Robert joined the faculty of the Department of Geology of the University of Delaware, reaching the rank of full professor in 1981. He transferred to Rutgers University in 1986 as a full professor, and retired in 2003 as Professor Emeritus. Robert was a fellow in the Geological Society of America, and a member of the American Geophysical Union and the American Association of Petroleum Geologists.

In his professional career, Robert contributed to the study of the Atlantic Continental

Margin from Canada to the Bahamas using seismic reflection and refraction, coring and deep-sea drilling. In 1975, he co-led a deep-sea drilling project in which he was one of the first geoscientists to touch recovered methane ice from a huge deposit off the U.S. In 1980, Robert led a deep-sea drilling project cruise off the coast of Florida which drilled the oldest yet recovered sediments of the Atlantic Ocean. Also in 1980, he developed a new theory called Pulsation Tectonics in which lower mantle cyclic convection first affects the geomagnetic field and later the cyclic fast and slower movements of the surface tectonic plates. Robert enjoyed passing on his knowledge of geology by conducting field trips and merit badge workshops for Boy Scout troops.

He was especially proud of his contributions to American Naval history by using his marine geophysical knowledge to help locate in 1973, identify in 1974, and recover in 1998 through 2002, the wreck of the Civil War ironclad, U.S.S. Monitor. Robert was a Civil War enthusiast before that project, as his great-grandfather had served in the Union Army. He took his son, David, and his grandson, Justin, on Boy Scout ten-mile hikes around Gettysburg Battlefield.

Robert also spent much time using his knowledge to help preserve the environment and history, serving on many commissions and organizations to keep history and the earth relevant to future generations. He was active in the George W. Taylor Civil War Round Table In NJ, the Wilmington Civil War Round Table, and the Central Dover Civil War Round Table. His love of the outdoors was reflected in time spent hunting, fishing, and helping with environmental cleanups and conservation projects. Robert's hunting achievements included killing two Canada geese on the wing with one shot, killing three whitetail bucks with his pistol, and at age 70, killing his first black bear. He was a descendant of veterans of the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and World War 1.

With Karen, Robert enjoyed traveling to places in the US and foreign countries.

In addition to his parents, Robert is preceded in death by his granddaughter, Jessica Lynne Hall. He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Karen (McCauley) Sheridan; children, Jennifer Hall, David (Laura), and Steven; siblings, Philip (Deanna), Elizabeth Balsamo, and Patricia Nisler; grandchildren, Justin Hall, Abigail Sheridan, and Rocco Sheridan, and numerous nieces and nephews.

A visitation for family and friends will be held from 6 pm until 8 pm on Tuesday, October 12, 2021, at Spicer-Mullikin Funeral Home, 275 East Main Street, Middletown, DE. A Mass of Christian Burial will be offered at 10:30 am on Wednesday, October 13, 2021, at St. Joseph Parrish, 371 East Main Street, Middletown, DE.