



## Keith Poland

September 29, 1945 - June 3, 2018

Keith Poland, of Waterville, a long-time and well-known Great Lakes fishing guide, died Sunday (June 3) in St. Luke's Hospital in Maumee. He was 72. His wife, Sandra, said that he had non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and other health complications.

He attended Longfellow School and was a 1963 graduate of DeVilbiss High School, where he ran track and starred in football. "They called him 'The Dazzler' at DeVilbiss in football," said Sandra Poland. "He played offensive and defensive end, Number 88." He was inducted into the DeVilbiss Sports Hall of Fame in 2009.

Following high school, he joined the construction trades with Edward Kelly & Sons, Inc., an area water and sewer contractor. "I always said that he got his B.S. degree from the School of Hard Knocks," said Sandy. "He loved construction; he operated the big machines. He was good at it, and was given a foremanship by age 30.

"But he came home one day and said, 'I'm not going to be in construction any more. I'm going to be a fishing captain'." Thus Keith launched a 37-year career in which he listed himself as a "boat captain," and his occupation as "fishing." He was a licensed charter fishing guide, and named his business "Pirate Sportfishing." His boats all sported stylized white-on-black "Pirate" pennants.

Over the years Poland fished his boats in western Lake Erie for walleye and yellow perch, docked at Meinke West Marina in Curtice. He also fished Lake

Huron and its famed lower Au Sable River for salmon and steelhead trout, and western Lake Ontario out of 4Cs Marina at Point Breeze, for several species of salmon and trout. In the early 1980s he became one of the early guides who back-rowed Pacific Northwest-style driftboats down the lower Au Sable above Oscoda, Mich. He was very successful and always credited much of his reputation as a top driftboat “guide to the tutelage” of the late Jim “Grampaw” Reinke, a veteran Oscoda guide. They were based at the Bunyantown Marina on the Au Sable at the U.S. 23 river-crossing.

The Poland boats over the years, beginning in 1980 with a relatively small, 25-foot Starcraft boat, always carried “Pirate” names – Pirate Lady for the first boat and its successor, a 29-foot Aquasport, and later additions, a pair of 31-foot twin-engine Tiaras that carried much of Keith’s career, the Snow Pirate and Pirate Queen. The little bright red Au Sable driftboat was the River Pirate. Poland was a genial guide and host to his customers and friends, and he was a master storyteller and jokester. “I just loved his stories,” said Sandy, “and he always had one. He knew no strangers.” He was a member and supporter of the West Sister Charter Boat Association, but was known for not engaging in political issues especially while “on duty.” His focus was on fishing.

Each year as late winter turned to early spring, his spouse recalls, “he’d nearly jump out of his skin to get going.” He enjoyed being addressed as “Captain Keith,” and over the years his massive, bearlike size earned him less than flattering if good-natured nicknames that often were used on the docks and on the lakes. He took it all with good grace.

“Keith was a wonderful person,” said Rick Ferguson, proprietor of Al Szuch Live Bait on Corduroy Road in Curtice. He is a long-time friend and business associate. “He was a great partner at Al Szuch Live Bait and will be sorely missed. All the employees at Al Szuch and all the employees at Meinke West will miss him big-time.”

He was born Sept. 29, 1945, in Findlay to the late Maxwell Keith Spencer and Mildred Nettie Topping, and was adopted at age 12 by Clifford Carlton Poland. He married Sandra Ahlgren in 1970.

In addition to Sandra, survivors include daughter, Jolene Poland, of Indianapolis; son Mark Poland (Diane Huss), of Dayton; brother David (Robin) Poland, of Toledo, and sisters, Jan Roby, of Alabama, and Jill Vershun, of Texas.

He was preceded in death by his parents, brother, Brent, and grandson, Robert Huss.

“We would like to give special thanks to the dedicated and skilled doctors and nurses at St. Luke’s intensive care unit and Toledo Clinic, business associates and family and friends,” said Sandra. “His fishing, his friends, and his family – those were his biggies.”

A visitation and celebration of life service are set for Friday, June 15, at Coyle Funeral Home and Cremation Services, 1770 South Reynolds Rd. Visitation is set for 3 to 6 p.m., with service at 6 p.m.

The family requests that any tributes be in the form of contributions to Great Lakes preservation and conservation organizations, or the Toledo Humane Society, Cherry Street Mission, Toledo Northwestern Ohio Food Bank, or SeaGate Food Bank. Please leave a condolence message and view Keith’s video tribute at [CoyleFuneralHome.com](http://CoyleFuneralHome.com).

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JUN **15**. 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

Coyle Funeral Home  
1770 S. Reynolds Road  
Toledo, OH 43614

## Funeral

JUN **15**. 6:00 PM (ET)

Coyle Funeral Home  
1770 S. Reynolds Road  
Toledo, OH 43614

# Tribute Wall

LJ

“ I always looked forward to our annual walleye trip with Keith. He was a skilled captain that always put us on the fish. Keith had a great sense of humor and told some memorable stories. My thoughts prayers are with his family in this time of sadness. RIP Keith.

Larry Jarvis

---

**Larry Jarvis** - June 15, 2018 at 11:02 AM

JE

“ WE had some Great times fishing with Keith in lake Erie and Lake Ontario. He will be Greatly missed. Best to all the family John Eisenhart

---

**John Eisenhart** - June 14, 2018 at 03:44 PM

JK

“ Thanks for memories, had a lot of fun working with Tom and Keith on race car back in late 70's learned a few things, some good some not so good, but enjoyed the time with Keith. Had a chance tot go fishing with him in New York, it was great, many fine memories. Jim Kelly

---

**Jim Kelly** - June 14, 2018 at 02:18 PM

JK

“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



---

**Jon Kramer** - June 14, 2018 at 11:48 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* was purchased for the family of Keith Poland.

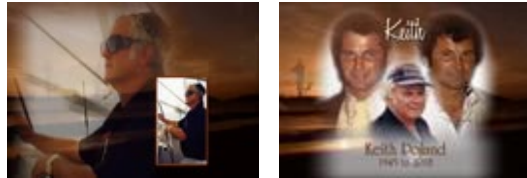


---

June 14, 2018 at 11:14 AM

CV

“ 2 files added to the album *New Album Name*



---

**COYLE FUNERAL HOME VIDEOS** - June 13, 2018 at 04:48 PM

SN

“ Keith was a fisherman of the first rate. It was a joy to share the passion of Great Lakes sportfishing with Keith over the years. I did not realize at the time how generous and kind of him it was to take the time to teach me so much about fishing, character, and life. One time we got into a school of nice steelhead and he said to me, “You will never forget those fish, jumping and fighting the way they do.” He was right; such wonderful memories. I will always remember those fish and I will always remember you. Thanks Keith.

---

**SEAN NEWMISTER** - June 13, 2018 at 02:36 PM

SG

“ I miss you already my old friend. I'm thankful for the times we had together just sitting and talking over a cold one at the boat, dock, trailer, wherever... You taught me so much, some about fishing, but alot about life. I signed up to be a captain, but I became a pirate. Love you Papa Keith.

-Capn Steve-



---

**Stephen Galbreth** - June 12, 2018 at 08:05 PM

JV

“ Keith didn't think his sisters would really join the annual fishing trip. When we did he guided us to some of the bigger catches! Click on the pic to see Dave, Pa, Jan, Jill and Keith with the twin salmons. We brought them in at the same time and it took ALL hands on deck to land them simultaneously. Great memories in so many ways.  
Love Jill



Jill Vershum - June 12, 2018 at 06:57 PM

DW

“ Fishing with Captain Keith is full of memories, reminders of a great story. Stories that I never wanted to end.

Dan Bollett Waterville - June 12, 2018 at 02:49 PM

MH

Keith was a funny guy...made me belly laugh every time I talked to you....I trusted you with my son Brandon....and I want to thank you for teaching him all the fun things about fishing...he always looked up to you...you were like a father to him....you will be missed by many...my deepest condolences to family...especially you Sandy & Jolene...God Bless...Mary Jo Halka

Mary Jo Halka - June 12, 2018 at 08:53 PM

TW

“ Fishing on the Great Lakes will never be the same. Will miss all the good times over the years. I just wish I would have known Keith's football nickname before he passed. Man I could of had some good ribbing with that one. Sandy, you did good keeping that one to yourself.

Our thoughts and prayers with you Keith and Sandy from the Pass it to Me tribe, FISH ON!!

Troy, Tom, Chris, Cliff and Al

---

**Troy Wade** - June 12, 2018 at 10:17 AM

MK

“ Keith was a mentor to me growing up when he was friends with my mom - he taught me how to fish for walleye, catfish and perch, and he taught me how to act like a man. He was strong and bold, yet a very kind gentelman. I will always remember days on Lake Erie fishing when he captained The Pirate's Lady, and telling so many great jokes along the way. I'm know he will be missed by many, but the happy memories of his great soul will live on forever. Rest easy, Captain.

---

**Matt Kincaid** - June 12, 2018 at 09:45 AM

MA

“ Captain Keith .....people don't get better than him...

---

**marc adams** - June 11, 2018 at 10:01 PM

DB

“ So long Keith I will see you on the other side. Its been nothing but good times, and will miss your jokes, pranks, and that infectious smile. Fish On !!

---

**Daniel Bollett-Waterville** - June 11, 2018 at 09:13 PM

SR

“ *Capt. Keith you will be missed by many. I am sure you will be fishing with the Lord!! You and my grandpa (Jim Reinke) will be once again pulling jokes on people!!!*

Shannon Reser - June 11, 2018 at 03:27 PM

 Eric Smithers

“ *Thank you, captain Keith, I couldn't have done it without you!*



Eric Smithers - June 11, 2018 at 01:11 PM

RL

“ *Ray and Nancy Leach purchased the Serenity Prayer 30" Sonnet for the family of Keith Poland.*



Ray and Nancy Leach - June 10, 2018 at 05:20 PM



“ *Small Garden Dish was purchased for the family of Keith Poland.*



June 10, 2018 at 02:02 PM

KI

“ Will miss him at the dock. Best story and joke teller. Blessed to have known him.



Kim - June 10, 2018 at 01:34 PM

KI

“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



Kim - June 10, 2018 at 01:31 PM

HC

To an old friend, team mate at DeVilbiss, boss and coworker you will be missed. We shared many adventures in life, with memoirs that will be treasured by me for the rest of my life. My prayers and thoughts are with the family.

Henry and Gerri Coombs

Henry Coombs - June 12, 2018 at 07:20 AM

CE

Going to miss you, old friend. Keith always knew when it was my turn in the rotation it was good for a strike on the long lead line. When it happened, he'd yell "Fish On" and laugh like hell. Rest In Peace my friend.

Chuck Engler

Chuck Engler - June 13, 2018 at 08:56 AM

JK

*When we were just kids my mom would drive us up to goose lake with camping gear kick us out and pick us back up in 4 or 5 days. Then Jon got his drivers lic. and the three of us would head out to turtle creek on the Tosaint fishing for cats. Thanks Sonny for some great growing up memories that i will always cherish.*

---

**Jay & Jon Kramer** - June 13, 2018 at 12:44 PM

JK

*Too many early fishing memories to list them all. We were probably the only teenagers sitting in a rented boat on the Toussaint River on a Friday night catfishing. Not to mention the football and basketball games with the McCloud and Mollenkamp families et al. Will miss you my friend. Sorry we didn't get to fish one more time. Godspeed.*

*Jon Kramer*

---

**Jon Kramer** - June 14, 2018 at 11:55 AM