



## Louis Nielsen

March 28, 2020

Louis Nielsen died peacefully on March 28, 2020 at the Hattie Ide Chafee nursing home in East Providence, RI, with his wife Martha and his daughter Sarah singing to him at his bedside. Song was a fitting farewell for a man whose greatest passion was choral music.

Louis' favorite number was 8. He would have loved the serendipity that he died on the 28th of March, which is the 88th day of the year, AND it was International Piano Day!

Louis was born on September 7, 1927, in Hørsholm, Denmark, to the late Gerda Marie Nielsen and Louis Paul George Nielsen.

He attended public schools, often biking and/or taking the bus or the train. He took to music when still a little kid, starting with learning many songs from the family's maid. He is said to have memorized 100 songs during his grade school years. He took piano lessons and played piano throughout his life. He always had music classes in school and it was a favorite teacher who started him on a life time love of classical music.

He was twelve years old when the Nazis invaded his country in April 1940, and occupied it for the next five years. His father joined the resistance movement and Louis built a radio so that his family could listen to the BBC

and follow the war news. During this time he became a firm believer in national defense and was proud of the highly successful efforts his country had made to protect its Jewish citizens during the Nazi occupation.

He received his undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering and his Masters Degree in Electronics from the Technical University of Denmark in Copenhagen. He then served one year in the Danish military as a radio operator.

In 1958, Louis was recruited to come to the United States to work for General Dynamics in Rochester, NY on the development of submarine sonar systems. He was credited with four patents during his work at GD. In 1971 he moved with his family to Doylestown, PA to work at American Electronics Laboratories designing microcircuits for LED watches. He concluded his career at the Submarine Signal Division of the Raytheon Company in Portsmouth, RI.

When Louis originally came to this country in 1958, "the plan" was to work and learn for a few years in the United States, which was, at the time, the uncontested leader in electronics, and then return to Denmark to continue his career. But as is often the case, he met a woman; he and Anne Dewey Holden changed "the plan" and in 1959 they married. In 1960 Louis became a naturalized U.S. citizen. The birth of their two daughters, Melinda Gerda and Kristin Dewey, followed. During Louis' life in the United States he and Anne and their daughters made many trips to his home country over the years to visit and stay in touch with family and best friends there, but he never again resided in Denmark.

In 1977 when Louis began working for Raytheon, he designed their house in Tiverton RI. The lot included many gardens, and Louis grew both vegetables and flowers. Among his most prized flowers was his hedge row of fragrant

pink rosa rugosa, colloquially known as beach roses. .... Sadly Anne died in 1980 after a long struggle with cancer.

As an enthusiastic and exemplary speaker of English as a second language, Louis absorbed many idiomatic phrases he acquired along the way. For example: in his later years if you asked how he was doing he would characteristically respond “Not bad, for an old coot.”

Louis' great joy in life remained classical and choral music. He played the piano, had a massive record and CD collection, and could often be found in his brown recliner, listening with headphones to music while reading the newspaper. Oftentimes he conducted, a habit he shared with his brother Niels.

In every town he lived, he belonged to a large community choir - in Rochester NY, Bethlehem PA and most recently The Providence Singers in Providence RI. He was a longtime member of the tenor section for thirty-one years - treasurer, board member, poster designer, recording program supervisor, and always an enthusiastic supporter.

In 1982 he married Martha Lawton Beardsley, whom he'd known and sung with in the Providence Singers. Martha and her two daughters Sarah and Rebekah and Louis and his two daughters formed a new “hybrid” family. Louis had brought his favorite Saab with him in 1958, and for many years his car was a Saab. He chose a vanity plate saying HYBRID, to reflect three different aspects of his life. He was a hybrid citizen, Danish and American; he was a hybrid electrical engineer; and his family was a hybrid blended one.

After Louis retired in 1992, he joined Dodeka, a club which meets once a month to share lunch and listen to a paper of interest read by one of its members. Louis' first of four papers was entitled “Holocaust Foiled” and told

the story of his experience during the German occupation of Denmark and the smuggling to safety of the Jews.

Louis and Martha belonged to three different churches during their thirty-eight years of marriage. Mathewson United Methodist Church in Providence and Amicable Congregational Church in Tiverton; in both of these churches they sang in the choir and served on various committees. In 1998, when they moved to Providence in order to be closer to friends and their many cultural activities, they became members of Central Congregational Church, largely because of its excellent music program. Louis served on both the Music and Sound System committees, contributing his considerable interest and expertise in both areas.

Louis will be remembered as a loving, accepting, and supportive husband, father, grandfather and brother. In his adopted country he is survived by his wife of thirty-eight years, Martha Lawton Nielsen; daughter Melinda Gerda Nielsen and her partner Harry Vandoloski, of Hadley, MA; daughter Kristin Nielsen Clark and son-in-law Raymond Clark, of North Kingstown, RI; step-daughter Sarah Beardsley O'Gara and son-in-law Daniel O'Gara, of North Providence, RI; step-daughter Rebekah Lee Anderson of Monson, Maine; and eight grandchildren - Kevin and Lina Clark; Lily, Rose, and Brian O'Gara; Max and Isabella Santagata; and Marissa Boynton. Joan and John Witte, his sister-in-law and brother in-law from his first marriage, predeceased him. He is survived by their children - his niece Faith Witte, her husband Chris Campbell and their daughter Claire Campbell; niece Beth Witte; and nephew Jack Witte, his wife Nanette Decea and their children Jack and Harry Witte. In his Danish family he is survived by his sister Marie-Louise Anderson of Pau, France; his niece Lina Ivar Andersen and her husband Fritz Grone of Copenhagen, Denmark; his nephew Simon Ivar Andersen and his wife Christine Tjalve of Tikøb, Denmark, and their children Mattias, Frederik, and Alma. His brother, Niels Christian Nielsen of Copenhagen, Denmark, preceded him in death in

2009.

His family's heartfelt thanks go out to the compassionate and skillful staff members of the Hattie Ide Chafee Home and HopeHealth Hospice, who cared for Louis during the last year-and-a-half of his life with dedication, humor, and love.

A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, please make donations in Louis' memory to the Hattie Ide Chafee Home, 200 Wampanoag Trail, East Providence RI 02905 or The Providence Singers, 667 Waterman Ave, East Providence RI 02914.

# Tribute Wall

LK

“ It was a treat to sing in the Providence Singers with Louis; he always had a kind word, and he just loved making music. After he retired from the Singers, whenever we ran into one another around town (most often at concerts or at the JCC gym) and I'd say, "Louis, it's good to see you," he would always answer, "It's good to be seen!" A lover of life, indeed, remembered fondly and with love.  
*Liz Kaplan*

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**Liz Kaplan** - May 04, 2020 at 04:36 PM

TR

“ So sorry to hear of Louis' death, but he certainly had a long, enjoyable, and fruitful life. We remember the wedding of Martha and Louis with the Providence Singers: Not everyone has full choral music at their wedding! Lovely! Over the years we shared fun times with them, but lost touch as the years went on. We were sorry to remember he suffered from CHF. Our condolences to Martha and the family, How fortunate and fitting that he was to pass into his next life with song.  
*Theil and Thom Ramsbey*

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**Theil and Thom Ramsbey** - April 26, 2020 at 04:22 PM

DC

*I knew Louis at Raytheon, and occasionally we worked together on projects. He was a fine gentleman and a wonderful person. In recent years we occasionally saw each other at Trinity Rep performances. I will miss him .  
*Marty Cohen**

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**Dr. Martin L. Cohen** - April 27, 2020 at 12:34 PM



*I worked with Louis at the legacy Raytheon Submarine Signal Division located at Portsmouth, Rhode Island. We were both assigned on several projects to the Electrical Engineering Design Department reporting to Dick Boldt. Louis was much my senior and a very helpful coach. Among our design assignments We traveled to subcontractor locations around the country arranging high priority technical content outsourcing. We attended his wedding to Martha in Providence. Louis was always a pleasure to work with. After all we both owned and enjoyed 2 cyl & 4 cyl SAAB autos . Yes, we had many SAAB stories to share.*

*Wm F Horan retired engineering fellow & Sr mgr Raytheon*

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**William F Horan** - April 27, 2020 at 01:22 PM



*I knew Louis when he worked at Raytheon. He was a sweet and talented man. May he rest in peace.*

*Tom Russell*

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**Tom Russell** - May 03, 2020 at 05:15 PM