



## Patrick Michael O'Brien

March 8, 1949 - September 18, 2024

Patrick Michael O'Brien, better known as OB, a true patriot and loving family man, died peacefully surrounded by his wife, brother, sister-in-law, and children at home on Wednesday, September 18, 2024. OB, 75, of Plainwell, formerly of Charlotte, was born March 8, 1949, in Detroit, the son of Dennis Joseph and Elizabeth Louise (Merritt) O'Brien. Growing up in Dearborn, OB learned the value of hard work pumping gas and working on cars at his father's service station. He attended Sacred Heart Catholic School but was drafted into the U.S. Army before graduating. OB's talents in mechanical problem-solving and innovative thinking landed him a role as a helicopter mechanic and door gunner aboard a Huey Helicopter in the thick of the Vietnam War. Upon his return from the war, OB found the disarray and chaos of the 1960s American homeland unbearable and volunteered immediately for a second tour of duty. He returned to the Vietnam jungles only to find his former base abandoned. He foraged his way to a new base, where he once again served his country with valor and distinction, earning countless decorations, including a Bronze Star.

Upon returning home, OB had several unusual jobs during these years, including training security dogs, going undercover for his father's Fairlane Detective Agency, working as a bouncer and steel truck driver, and earning his welding certification to construct dune buggies. He finished his G.E.D. and went on to earn two associate degrees. He eventually found his calling,

enlisting with the Army Air National Guard, where he remained for nearly forty years. He married the love of his life, Sherry Lynn Murrell, affectionately known to OB as Margaret, on October 16, 1976. A few years into their marriage, Sherry and OB welcomed their son, Shaun Patrick O'Brien, and soon after, their daughter, Tara Elizabeth O'Brien. They moved their young family to Charlotte, MI, where they would reside for 40 years.

OB continued his service as a career helicopter mechanic with the Air National Guard in Grand Ledge, eventually attaining the rank of First Sergeant. His unit was deployed to Iraq, where he served his final tour of active combat duty at Camp Anaconda in Balad. His troops trusted his combat experience and leadership, and he commanded respect from all who worked alongside him, including his superiors. OB was always known to stand up for what is right and never back down. His humility wouldn't allow him to admit it, but to all who knew him, he was the true definition of an honorable man and a hero.

OB organized the St. Patrick's Day celebration at the armory in Grand Ledge for many years, complete with corned beef and cabbage, serving over 100 servicemen and their families. His innate ability and natural God-given intelligence allowed him to solve problems many others couldn't, a trait he passed on to his children. Patriotism was a top priority in OB's life. To him, "Country is Family." He organized and led the construction of the Memorial Wall in Grand Ledge and served as a Mercy Pilot for those in need of transportation for long-distance medical care.

Above all, OB will be remembered for his dependability, courage, and love for his family.

OB is survived by his wife of nearly 48 years, Sherry O'Brien; their son, Shaun (Lara) O'Brien; their daughter, Tara (Aaron) McCullough; three grandsons, Beckett and Colin McCullough, and Logan O'Brien; sister, Beth (Ron) Clark;

brother, Kevin (Fran) O'Brien; and several nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents and two brothers, Timmy O'Brien and Dennis O'Brien.

Friends are encouraged to support OB's family by attending services or sharing memories on his Tribute Page at [www.prayfuneral.com](http://www.prayfuneral.com). A Memorial Mass will be celebrated at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 28, 2024, at St. Mary Catholic Church in Charlotte, with Rev. Fr. Dwight Ezop officiating. Visitation will be one hour before the service at the church and in the Parish Hall after completing military honors. The funeral will be webcast so you may watch it from any computer, smartphone, or mobile device with internet access. Go to [www.prayfuneral.com](http://www.prayfuneral.com), click on OB's tribute, then click on Photos and Videos from your computer (or Media from your smartphone). In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorial contributions to the Wounded Warrior Project. The family is in the care of Pray Funeral Home, Charlotte.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

SEP **28.** 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Mary Catholic Church  
807 St. Mary Boulevard  
Charlotte, MI 48813

## Memorial Mass

SEP **28.** 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Mary Catholic Church  
807 St. Mary Boulevard  
Charlotte, MI 48813

# Tribute Wall



“ Pray Funeral Home, Inc created a Webcast in memory of Patrick Michael O'Brien



Pray Funeral Home, Inc. - September 28, 2024 at 02:48 PM

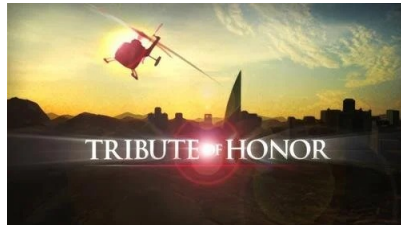
DL

Thank you for sharing the mass for all who loved Pat and couldn't be together in person. It was a lovely service. Much love, Denise and Joe Lemieux

Denise Lemieux - September 28, 2024 at 04:24 PM



“ Pray Funeral Home, Inc created a Tribute Video in memory of Patrick Michael O'Brien



Pray Funeral Home, Inc. - September 27, 2024 at 06:31 PM

BR

What a beautiful and fitting tribute to a cousin I only met twice that I can remember. Regardless, he left an indelible impression. May he rest in peace and his loving family be comforted by countless good memories.  
-Brian Richardson

Brian Richardson - September 28, 2024 at 12:38 PM

TD

“ God speed, OB. You were the first person I met at the Grand Ledge armory, yet I stayed. 🙄. OB would laugh at that. You will be missed. Until we meet again, brother.

*“ I have fought when others feared to serve.  
I have gone where others failed to go.  
I've lost friends in war and strife,  
Who valued Duty more than love of life.*

*I have shared the comradeship of pain.  
I have searched the lands for men that we have lost.  
I have sons who served this land of liberty,  
Who would fight to see that other stricken lands are free.*

*I have seen the weak forsake humanity.  
I have heard the traitors praise our enemy.  
I've seen challenged men become even bolder,  
I've seen the Duty, Honor, Sacrifice of the Soldier.*

*Now I understand the meaning of our lives,  
The loss of comrades not so very long ago.  
So to you who have answered duties siren call,  
May God bless you my son, may God bless you all.”*

*—Lewis Millett*

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**Thom Drake** - October 05, 2024 at 06:15 PM

JW

“ Sherry, Shaun, and Tara, I just saw today about Pat's passing. I am so very sorry I did not know so that I could express my feelings for your Pat directly. I cannot begin to express how much knowing Pat was one of the luckiest experiences of my time here in Charlotte. There is not one person whom I respect more. His devotion to the service of our country is of course important and should never be forgotten. In spite of his tough exterior, however, was one of the most sensitive, caring and loving people I knew. He showed this every day, when talking about how proud he was of each of you. Whenever I talked with him, I left knowing I was with a truly wonderful person whom I admired more than anyone I knew. For his grandchildren, who I never knew, I can picture him with his giant smile enjoying every minute with them. Thank you, Pat and Sherry, for being a part of my life. Joe Wimmer

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**Joe Wimmer** - October 05, 2024 at 11:11 AM

FL

“ Fuzzy key largo purchased the Southern Magnolia a Tree for the family of Patrick Michael O'Brien.



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**Fuzzy key largo** - September 29, 2024 at 02:05 PM

FL

“ Fuzzy key largo planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Patrick Michael O'Brien.

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**Fuzzy key largo** - September 29, 2024 at 02:05 PM

CS

“ RIP OB, Thanks for the fond memories during the time we served at the Grand Ledge Aviation Facilities. You were always good to me and all the others we served with. My thoughts and prayers go out to the O'Brien family! Chris Smith

CHRIS SMITH - September 29, 2024 at 10:31 AM

LF

“ Love, Darren, Carolyn & Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Patrick Michael O'Brien.

Love, Darren, Carolyn & Family - September 27, 2024 at 10:24 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Life Tributes



Pray Funeral Home, Inc. - September 27, 2024 at 02:29 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Patrick Michael O'Brien.



September 27, 2024 at 11:12 AM

IT

“ Ian, Michaela, Braden, Brenda and Todd planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Patrick Michael O'Brien.

Ian, Michaela, Braden, Brenda and Todd - September 27, 2024 at 11:12 AM

FO

“ Faelan, Sandy and Barrie O'Brien planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Patrick Michael O'Brien.

Faelan, Sandy and Barrie O'Brien - September 26, 2024 at 09:27 PM



“ Sacred Duty Spray was purchased for the family of Patrick Michael O'Brien.



September 26, 2024 at 09:27 PM

MM

“ Mark M. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Patrick Michael O'Brien.

Mark M. - September 26, 2024 at 07:38 PM

MS

“ Matt and Monica Schueller purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Patrick Michael O'Brien.



Matt and Monica Schueller - September 26, 2024 at 06:16 PM

LA

“ Love, Micah, Shelly and Ava purchased the Beautiful Dreams for the family of Patrick Michael O'Brien.




Love, Micah, Shelly and Ava - September 26, 2024 at 07:53 AM



“ Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Patrick Michael O'Brien.



September 25, 2024 at 07:55 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Patrick Michael O'Brien.



September 24, 2024 at 02:37 PM

GT

“ I was blessed to serve with OB at the AASF National Guard Base in Grand Ledge for many years. He was one of the special guys you never forget.

OB presented a tough exterior and a man's man image but beneath that exterior was a compassionate, caring and a dedicated patriot and family man.

He was always some one you could count on thru thick or thin. He took his military leadership positions very seriously and as he rose through the ranks to be a First Sargent he excelled at accomplishing the mission and taking care of his soldiers. When OB had your back you were definitely covered. He battled physical challenges while serving as a mechanic and never complained or sought sympathy . He was a go to guy for managers and senior commanders and leaders especially on morale and welfare issues of his fellow employees and soldiers. He served well in a challenging role as the AASF Shop Steward and Partnership Council Co Chair. He knew how to resolve conflicts and solve people problems. He never sought the limelight but when challenged he always stood for what was right. I like a few others knew how to change his private moods which were sometimes grumpy or dark, talking about his family always brought a smile to his face. His annual St Patrick Day Dinners at the AASF were joyous and legendary. My deepest condolences to his family as I know he will greatly missed. Our faith teaches us we will see him again in Paradise. RIP my brother until we meet again

Gary Tucker

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Gary Tucker - September 24, 2024 at 10:42 AM



“ *America the Beautiful was purchased for the family of Patrick Michael O'Brien.*



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September 24, 2024 at 10:15 AM



“ *All the memories i have of Patrick, his Irish Eyes were Smiling!!!  
Now Heaven is smiling with those Irish Eyes smiling in Heaven.*



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**Sharon Wnetrzak** - September 24, 2024 at 12:13 AM



“ *Patrick & Sarrah Clark purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Patrick Michael O'Brien.*



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**Patrick & Sarrah Clark** - September 23, 2024 at 08:52 PM

SG

“ When I first met “Patrick” (from early on he always called me “Stephan” so I always called him “Patrick”), I found him kinda scary. I was new to aviation and he was, well he was OB. Later, when I hired on as Technician, he was still kinda scary. But over the next 20years or so of work together, we developed a friendship of sorts. I came to know him as not just scary and grumpy but also as a devoted father and husband and a fellow Catholic man. I remember one time where he hurt himself (one of many times he hurt himself) while installing a zip line for the kids. Whenever he started getting grumpy with me, I would just ask him about his family or his Parish and we would have a pretty good talk. I have many memories of Patrick and a few stories but mostly just a feeling of respect for the family man he was and sadness for his family as I’m sure they will miss him greatly. He grew up rough and lived a tough life but he was definitely a man of conviction and devotion to family, country and God. Fare well, Patrick. “May the Angles meet you in paradise, and the martyrs greet you on the way.”

Steve Graszler - September 23, 2024 at 05:05 PM

LF

“ Larry Christenson Family purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Patrick Michael O'Brien.



Larry Christenson Family - September 23, 2024 at 04:27 PM

LF

“ Larry Christenson Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Patrick Michael O'Brien.

Larry Christenson Family - September 23, 2024 at 04:27 PM

MH

“ Mary and Harald planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Patrick Michael O'Brien.

Mary and Harald - September 23, 2024 at 11:19 AM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Patrick Michael O'Brien.



September 23, 2024 at 11:19 AM

DB

“ Derek B. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Patrick Michael O'Brien.

Derek B. - September 23, 2024 at 11:18 AM

PD

“ Patrick and Jamie Dougherty planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Patrick Michael O'Brien.

Patrick and Jamie Dougherty - September 22, 2024 at 08:36 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Patrick Michael O'Brien.



September 22, 2024 at 08:36 PM



“ Willie and Barb Murrell planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Patrick Michael O'Brien.

Willie and Barb Murrell - September 22, 2024 at 02:57 PM



“ Willie and Barb Murrell purchased the Amazing Grace 44" Sonnet for the family of Patrick Michael O'Brien.



Willie and Barb Murrell - September 22, 2024 at 02:57 PM



“ OB, what a special kinda guy and quite a character. He could fix anything, and if he couldn't, he'd make shit up...then laugh or give me that look. Always knew that he respected me as a pilot, even though he didn't show it. We go way back. Blessings and love to his family. So sorry for such a loss.

Randy Laney - September 22, 2024 at 06:27 AM

DW

“ My husband Dan Wicker worked with OB for many years. They have many great memories regarding work, deployment and of course parties and hayrides at OBs home. Our prayers are with the family. May many of Gods Blessings surround you all.

Dan & Vicky Wicker - September 21, 2024 at 09:27 PM

NW

“ Nancy W. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Patrick Michael O'Brien.

Nancy W. - September 21, 2024 at 05:30 PM

NC

“ Cousin Pat, a one of a kind ❤️ There are so many memories. The surprise of taking my Mom on a motorcycle ride in the 1960s. We kids could not believe our eyes! Telling scary stories by the campfire and then tossing a little gun powder into the fire on the sky. Adding fuel to the fire of the story. The kids would be 'what happened'? The many hayrides and family reunions hosted by you and Sherry! Wonderful memories! May God hold you are yours in the palm of his hand. Nancy ❤️

Nancy Wareck Pats cousin - September 21, 2024 at 05:19 PM

MC

So many happy memories 🥰 I remember walking in to bar in Dearborn with a few girlfriends. Pat was playing pool with a few guys. His eyes grew huge and he said "What are you doing here?!" I guess he thought I was still a kid cousin, we had a few laughs about that. Sending peace and love to everyone. Love, Molly

Molly O'Grady, Pat's cousin - September 21, 2024 at 05:25 PM

LM

“ Love, Molly and Mike planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Patrick Michael O'Brien.

Love, Molly and Mike - September 21, 2024 at 05:18 PM

LM

“ Love, Molly and Mike purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Patrick Michael O'Brien.



Love, Molly and Mike - September 21, 2024 at 05:18 PM

MT

“ Maureen T. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Patrick Michael O'Brien.

Maureen T. - September 21, 2024 at 12:37 PM

AW

“ I knew Pat for many years as we were both in the Guard at Grand Ledge. He was good at what he did, all around good guy, and certainly a one of a kind. I SALUTE YOU my friend, military, and Vietnam Brother. Until we meet again. Alvin Warren

Alvin Warren - September 20, 2024 at 07:52 PM