



## Dr. Duane F. Hillis DVM

October 3, 1946 - November 3, 2020

Duane F. Hillis, DVM, 74, of Lenox, MA, died Tuesday November 3, 2020 surrounded by his family at Berkshire Medical Center after a short battle with heart failure and cancer.

Duane was born in Niskayuna, NY, on October 3, 1946 to the late Reginald and Viola Hillis. He graduated from Colonie Central High School in 1964 and attended Cornell University where he obtained his doctorate in veterinary medicine in 1970. After selling his second veterinary hospital in 1978, he moved to Newton, MA to pursue a career in commercial real estate in the Boston area.

Duane was a committed civic volunteer for the city of Newton, serving as President of Friends of Nahanton Park for thirty years. He was also a board member of the Newton Conservators and assisted with NewTV's environmental programming. Duane was a leading member of a team of volunteers that successfully applied for Newton Community Preservation Funds to purchase the Newton Community Farm. For this work, the Newton Conservators named Duane and two others Environmentalists of the Year in 2006. Duane received this award a second time in 2016 for his work on the Woodcock Meadow Team.

Duane was a caring and committed husband, father, and grandfather. He loved spending time with his family, cheering on his grandchildren at their sporting events, and family meals.

Duane met Mary Reinhart at a 5th grade band concert. Duane loved to tell the

story of how he approached her afterwards to compliment her on the excellent performance. Duane and Mary married on July 24, 1967 in Albany, NY.

Besides his wife, Mary, Duane is survived by his children; Dr. John Hillis and his wife, Melissa, of Jacksonville, FL, Robert Hillis and his wife, Elena, of Los Angeles, CA, Molly Elliot and her husband, Mark, of Lenox, MA, and Maggie Estlinbaum and her husband, Tyler, of Marcellus, NY, grandchildren; Gabrielle and Dillon Hillis, Dane, Hannah, Magnus, and Odin Hillis, Mary, Grace, and Jane Elliot, Ernest and Henry Estlinbaum, and his sister, Nancy Famolari, and her husband, Gene.

All services for Dr. Duane F. Hillis will be private. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Lenox Land Trust in care of the Roche Funeral Home, 120 Main Street, Lenox, MA, 01240.

# Tribute Wall

TN

“ I was a Sophomore at CCHS Duane was a year ahead of me. The jocks of CCHS always took the late bus home after daily practices. Duane played football I ran cross country. One night we all climbed onto the bus I sat back in the rear Duane was seated in the row in front of me. The star running back of the football team a hulk, a senior got on our bus from the front called out that someone had stolen his wallet and asked if any of us knew anything about it. Me, a dumb freshman trying to impress, to be accepted call out "it all depends how much money was in it". Lou the running back races to the rear of the bus asking who said that? Me silent cowering in my seat. Duane looks up at him and says "it was me Lou, sorry I was just kidding". After Lou left Duane turned around and said me to me "don't ever mess with that guy he'll kill you". The Duane I knew. RIP brother.

Tim Hooley, Niskayuna NY - December 01, 2020 at 10:44 AM

ME

Thank you for that beautiful story if my dad. Thank you!

Molly Elliot - January 06, 2021 at 08:50 PM

SB

“ To the family of Duane Hillis:  
All of us at Newton Community Farm were saddened to hear of Duane's passing. He was instrumental in the creation of the Farm and we are forever grateful for his work to develop this community treasure.  
Our sincere condolences,  
Sue Bottino, Executive Director, Newton Community Farm

Sue Bottino - November 18, 2020 at 09:37 AM

ME

*Thank you, Sue!*

Molly Elliot - January 06, 2021 at 08:49 PM

GM

“ *" My wife Jennifer and I are very sad to hear that Duane Hillis recently passed away. Jennifer and I had a close friendship with Duane and Mary especially when Duane and I were Veterinary students at Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine. Duane was a grooms man in our wedding in 1967.*

*I was last in contact with Duane in the spring of 2020 regarding our 50th reunion from Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine. He said he was unable to attend so we decided that all four of us would get together for lunch as soon as the Covid-19 pandemic allowed this. I actually was about to contact Duane about a lunch date when I heard he passed away.*

*Duane was a wonderful person and friend. He was exceptionally intelligent. We frequently studied together during our Vet School days which was a great benefit to both of us.*

*The last time I saw Duane was many years ago when Duane and his daughter Maggie visited Jennifer and me at our home in New Hampshire. Conversations with Duane were always up lifting to me. He was the only one who always referred to me as "Gregor".*

*Jennifer and I will dearly miss Duane."*

*Gregory Jon Melkonian DVM, MD*

Gregory Jon Melkonian DVM, MD - November 17, 2020 at 08:43 AM

DH

“ Duane was a classmate of mine at Cornell and with his last name starting with H and mine the same we were in many of the same labs together. Duane always had the great smile and attitude and would brighten any room when he entered. He developed a shopping mall close to my clinic in Southern Maine and I got to see him several times during this project. Truly an "unforgettable" person. My sincere condolences, a classmate and friend, Dr. Doug Hutchins

---

**Dr Doug Hutchins** - November 17, 2020 at 08:40 AM

LC

“ I also was a classmate and good friend of Duane and Mary at Colonie Central High School, and have wonderful memories. A strong debater, Duane was a lively member of Mrs. Huffmire's social studies class, and I had the fun of being on his team for the Model United Nations -- we were the Soviet Union (at the height of the "Cold War"). The Hillis family represented the best of the Colonie community and I am grateful for having had the opportunity to visit with Duane and Mary at our 50th reunion.  
Lynne Cotich Cote

---

**Lynne Cote** - November 10, 2020 at 11:35 AM

ME

Thank you, Lynne! Molly Hillis Elliot

---

**Molly Elliot** - November 13, 2020 at 07:38 PM

RK

“ Dear Molly, Grace and all,  
I am so very sorry to read about the loss of  
your Dad/Grandfather. We never know when  
our loved ones will be called “home”, even  
though we wish they could live forever. I am  
sure you have many beautiful memories to sustain you. Please  
know that I am sending prayers to all of you for peace and comfort  
in the days ahead. God bless.  
With sincere sympathy,  
BeckyKnox  
P.S. I fondly remember my teaching days in Lenox.



---

**Rebecca Knox** - November 08, 2020 at 10:01 AM

JT

“ I am sorry to hear of Duane's passing  
I would see him every morning at LenoxFit, always with a smile.  
Rest in Peace, Duane.

---

**Joan Gennari Tyer** - November 08, 2020 at 07:50 AM

ST

“ My name is Sally Treis Legendre. I was in Colonie Central’s Class of 1964 with Duane and Mary, both of whom I thought highly of. I had many classes with Duane and knew how smart he was so I am not surprised he became a veterinarian. Also growing up in a farm atmosphere on Consaul Road probably contributed to his choice of a career. A personal story about Duane and his family I would like to share is that probably when I was in junior high school my grandmother acquired 3 ducks who I took care of one summer. When winter was approaching we didn’t have a way to take care of the ducks so we tried to think of what we could do with them. The Hillis’s’ had several ducks, a pond, and a duck coop at the time so I got up my courage and asked Duane if we could leave my well loved pet ducks with his ducks. Without a second thought Duane said “sure “ and I could visit them whenever I wanted to. I have never forgotten this huge favor he did for me and his kindness!

---

**Sally Treis** - November 07, 2020 at 11:02 PM

AL

“ Dear Hillis Family,

*My husband and I were classmates of you Dad and Mom at Colonie Central High School. Your Dad was a sweet and gentle soul. We saw them last at our 50th class reunion. It was wonderful. My husband and I still live in the area in fact across the road from where your Dad grew up. Our deepest condolences to your family.*

*Anne Marie and Bob Lemerise*

---

**Anne Marie Lemerise** - November 07, 2020 at 01:31 PM

ME

*Thank you, Anne Marie! I will be sure to share this with my mom. My dad was a gentle giant! Thank you.*

---

**Molly Hillis Elliot** - November 07, 2020 at 07:52 PM



“ *We always loved seeing Duane at his Lenox grandkids' events whether athletic or performing arts. He was always outgoing and extremely proud of his children and grandchildren.*

---

**Robert Vaughan** - November 06, 2020 at 07:20 PM

LL

*To Mary especially. I am sorry for your loss. The last time I saw you was at Louise Silva's funeral. I always thought about you and your family when I drove by your house on Winchester St. I remember when our girls Marran and Maggie went to Countryside. I hardly knew Duane but what really struck me was the Newton Farm. Though I am not involved in it at all I thought the whole idea of Newton preserving a working farm was terrific. For that alone I salute Duane and all he did. I send you a virtual hug. Lee Linsky*

---

**Leonore Linsky** - November 07, 2020 at 10:53 AM

ME

*Thank you, Bob! And Thank you Lee Linsky! My dad was at Theresa Walsh's bedside near her passing and she asked my dad to make sure that the Angino Farm deal went through. He took it to heart and put all his effort and knowledge into making sure it happened. It is such a beautiful part of the Newton community and I am so proud of my dad for his contribution to it.*

---

**Molly Hillis Elliot** - November 07, 2020 at 07:55 PM

DO

“ *He was one of kind, unique and individualistic, always taking the bull by the horns. He was bigger than life and always there on the side-line for each and every game. We enjoyed each others company, his sincerity towards wanted to know how things are stayed true. That booming voice yelling "you can do it" will forever echo in my heart. RIP Mr Hillis*

---

**dominic** - November 05, 2020 at 12:31 PM

ME

*Thank you, Dominic! We appreciate your words and I now remember him yelling "You can do it" on the sidelines of the NSHS football games. He wanted to support everyone in all their efforts in life like that, "You can do it."*

---

**Molly Hillis Elliot** - November 07, 2020 at 07:57 PM

DR

*Mary, I'm saddened to hear about Duan's passing. May God give comfort and peace to you and your family.*

---

**Dean Rueckert** - November 07, 2020 at 10:50 PM