



Lt. Gov. Connie Binsfeld

April 18, 1924 - January 12, 2014

Connie Berube Binsfeld, 89, of Maple City, MI, passed from this life on January 12, 2014. A loving wife, mother, grandmother and longtime resident of Glen Lake, she served her community and state as a Leelanau County Commissioner, State Representative, State Senator and eight years as Michigan's Lt. Governor.

Born in Munising, MI on the shores of Lake Superior in 1924, Connie was the third child of Elsie Berube, a just-widowed school teacher. Connie never knew her father - he was tragically killed in an auto accident, leaving Elsie with two young children and a third on the way. Aunts, uncles, cousins and neighbors all helped raise Connie. The sense of community she gained from growing up in Munising produced the moral foundations on which she built her life, her family and her political career.

Connie grew up during the depression in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. She witnessed how thankful her mother was to have a job (even at half the pay the men made) and how thrifty she had to be to raise a young family without a husband. Education was important to this family of a teacher. Connie achieved top grades and led her classmates as president of the small student council. When the war came, her brothers Bob and Bill went to fight overseas. They sent their pay home so that "Sis" could go away to college.

It was a long train ride through the UP wilderness, crossing the Straits of Mackinac by ferry, then down to Adrian, MI where Connie attended Siena Heights College. For holidays, she frequently traveled home with classmates who lived nearby downstate. On one such visit she met a young soldier home on leave. John Binsfeld was the older brother of school chums Reet and Binnie. Connie and John fell in love and when he came out of the service they were married.

The young couple, like so many in the post war years, settled into Detroit suburbia and started growing a family. Young John came first, then Greg (and a move to a bigger house), then Susan, Paul (another house) and finally Mike (and the move to Elgin in Huntington Woods). Family and community were always important, and as a

neighborhood Mom, Connie wore the hats of scout leader (Boys and Girls Scouts), Church supporter, PTA and eventually teacher of Social Studies and History when the children were older.

In 1968, troubled times in the Motor City and troubled health of husband John led the family to relocate to their beloved Glen Lake in NW Michigan. When the Federal Government began buying surrounding property to create the Sleeping bear Dunes National Lakeshore, local citizens formed a council to have a voice in the plan. Connie rose to the challenge as their leader, thus entering into her long and celebrated political career.

Recognized and respected for her listening and speaking skills, Connie was elected three times to the Leelanau County Commission, four times to the Michigan House of Representatives, twice to the Michigan Senate and twice to the Office of Lt. Governor. All told, this career spanned 30 years of service. From the humble beginning as the only woman on the local County Commission, she rose to become the only woman in Michigan history to serve in leadership positions of both Legislative Houses and as President of the Senate as Lt. Governor. Connie worked tirelessly in all corners of the state, always taking time to listen to constituents and to help them find solutions to their different problems.

Her crowning achievement was the creation of the “Binsfeld Children’s Commission” during her second term as Lt. Governor. Findings of her commission were incorporated into a package of 20 Bills that she wrote, reforming adoption laws and children’s rights. Writing legislation is hardly the responsibility of the President of the Senate, but Connie felt compelled to be an advocate for the children of Michigan. In an unprecedented show of support by her peers, all Bills passed unanimously in both the Michigan House and Senate and were signed into law by Governor John Engler.

It’s not surprising that this champion for children earned many honors and accolades throughout her career, including Honorary Doctorates of Humane Letters from Notre Dame, Northern Michigan, Grand Valley State University and other prestigious institutions of higher learning. Of all her accolades, she was most proud to be selected as Michigan Mother of the Year in 1977.

Connie loved her family, both immediate and extended. She enjoyed nothing more than welcoming all into the home she and John shared on beautiful Glen Lake. Kids and grandkids were always coming and going, with swimming and boating, and many conversations and meals together. In later years she and John kept a second home up in Munising where Connie was loved like nowhere else! They named it “Home Again!”

Connie is survived by John, her husband of 66 years; four children, Gregory R. Binsfeld of Steamboat Springs, Co; Susan C. Maxwell (Michael) of Santiago, Mexico; Paul J. Binsfeld (Cherie) of Empire, MI; Michael W. Binsfeld (Mindy) of Maple City, MI; daughter-in-law, Maria Binsfeld, Broomfield, CO; 6 grandchildren: Becky Hummel (Chris) of Grand Haven, MI; Katy and Gus Maxwell; Nancy, Molly, and Matt Binsfeld; two great grandchildren: Ethan and Raina Hummel; step grandson Stuart Bentley and many nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, Omer and Elsie Berube, her two brothers, T. William Berube and Robert O. Berube (Joyce), and her son, John T. Binsfeld.

The family will hold a private service now, but plans to celebrate a Memorial Service with extended family and friends to honor Connie's life in the late spring or summer. Details will be published at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to one of the following worthy causes championed by Connie:

Chance at Childhood Program

The City Opera House of Traverse City

Please share your thoughts and memories of Connie with her family by way of her online guest book at <http://www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com>.

The family is being served by Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home and Cremation Services, Traverse City.

Comments



“ Death Undisclosed reasons

RYYY - February 10, 2016 at 02:45 PM



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me - February 10, 2016 at 02:05 PM



“ Throughout the years Connie and I had many encounters throughout Leelanau County, through family members, Glen Arbor Town Hall functions, Glen Lake Bridge Walks, and graciously in her home. Each encounter taught me the sincere understanding and the true meaning of respect and respecting each other and respecting our differences. She exemplified that understanding and always graciously agreed to disagree respectfully. Her smile and loveliness has always been and will always be an example to me of how to be respectful of others...I will miss her dearly....Kathleen Dodge Buhler

Kathleen Dodge Buhler - February 17, 2014 at 10:55 AM



“ It was an honor having known Connie for over 40 years. Her son Paul and I started our radio careers together in Traverse City and have remained best of friends since those halcyon days. I was privileged to spend a fair amount of time with the family at Glen Lake and knocked on a good many doors helping to win a seat for Connie in the Michigan State House of Representatives. Always at the top of her game, Connie's passing has left a tremendous void, especially for those of us with fond memories. Godspeed

Steve Barber - February 04, 2014 at 03:26 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Connie's 40th Birthday



Steve Barber - February 04, 2014 at 03:18 PM



“ We are keeping your family in our thoughts and prayers. My parents, John & Margaret Greening were close friends with Connie & John. My Dad and John had been friends since second grade in Grosse Pointe. My parents always enjoyed the time they spent with your family on Glen Lake. We are very grateful to Connie for recommending Glen Eden to us. It was our favorite vacation spot for 10 years. I know my parents will be happy to spend time with Connie in heaven.
Patricia Greening Wright

Patricia Wright - January 24, 2014 at 09:39 AM



“ Greg, for most of a lifetime I've kept a silent pride in having known, to the extent a 12 year old boy can know, your mother, Connie. Myself a scout in the 60's, Huntington Woods Troop 1292, I've often since thought of the several Courts of Honor wherein your young mother earned special recognition for her extraordinary contributions of time and energy supporting our adventures. You moved to Glen Arbor. At 24 I settled in Charlevoix, often reading about your mother's continued advocacy for things that matter, the offices, titles and recognition she earned for her efforts. So, just know I've thought of you and she often over the last 37 years. I'm thinking of, and praying peace for you and your family now.

Traver Wood

Traver Wood - January 22, 2014 at 06:48 PM



“ Lt. Governor Binsfeld was an amazing leader and advocate for children. She not only led the Children's Commission, she had a continuing vision to help children in Michigan. One of the Commission's recommendations was that children's lawyers and social workers would be effective partners on behalf of abused and neglected children. She had the vision for the Chance at Childhood Program at Michigan State University School of Social Work. This program has trained scores of social work students and law students together in an innovative program that serves as a national model for preparing social workers and lawyers for serving children. All because of Connie's vision and support! What a marvelous legacy--it was an honor and privilege to work with her. She was a special friend and will be dearly missed. Our sympathy and appreciation to her loving family.

Gary Anderson, PhD, LMSW

Professor and Former Director, MSU School of Social Work

Gary Anderson - January 22, 2014 at 10:44 AM



“ Our prayers and thoughts are with the Binsfeld family. Connie and our mom, Ann Scholtes Thompson, were cousins. We have fond memories of Connie when our families would get together in Lansing and Munising. She will be missed by all who new and loved her.

Betty Ann Thompson Nelson

Betty Nelson - January 22, 2014 at 08:26 AM



“ I would just like to send my condolences to John and the Binsfeld family, and offer my prayers. It was an honor to be selected by Lt. Gov. Binsfeld to serve on her Children's Commission. and see her dedication to improving the lives of neglected and abused children in Michigan firsthand. She was a true public servant to Michigan's citizens.

Tom North - January 21, 2014 at 04:50 PM



“ Thoughts and prayers to Uncle Jack and all my cousins and their families. I'll never forget the awesome family reunions on Glen Lake and the incredible shrinking machine in the basement...(Aunt Connie may not have known about this). She was always so kind and indeed a great listener. She will be missed by all. Terry (Toot) and family of Gaylord.

Terry O'Connor and family - January 21, 2014 at 07:17 AM



“ To Connie's Family: As a high school educator (retired)in the Upper Peninsula, I appreciated Connie's political integrity and concern for our children in her work as a faithful public servant. She will be remembered as one who always cared for her constituents and her work will affect our children and grandchildren well into Michigan's future. Our current politicians could take many lessons from her dedicated service. Dan Richards, Republic

dan Richards - January 20, 2014 at 09:03 PM



“ I remember a truly wonderful and gracious woman who worked tirelessly for the public good and rose to positions of high influence without ever losing the common touch, persona and open approachability one comes to love from folks up north. We honor her service and offer our sincere wishes and God's grace to her family for generational memories of a life well lived. Thank You Connie!

Daniel Kostrzewa, Missi Yeomans
TC

daniel j kostrzewa - January 20, 2014 at 12:24 PM



“ I had the oppotunity to meet Connie while I worked at PSB in Munising. Wonderful person !!!! Munising and Michigan were fortunate to have her representing us, and caring for us. My deepest sympathy is extended to all of Connie's family and "thanks for sharing her with us" . Dick Cromell

Dick Cromell - January 20, 2014 at 09:05 AM



“ My Prayers and Thoughts are with the whole Binsfeld Family. My Mom Kate Anderson and Aunt Connie were cousins. She is truly remembered with wonderful stories and her great accomplishments. She was such a force for my mom and our family when my dad and sister died. She, Uncle Jack and the family were a constant when we were growing up. Mom was so proud her, her family and all the accomplishments they acquired. Whenever they could get together it was always special. When Aunt Connie gave she gave her all. She will always have a special place in our hearts. Lisa Anderson McCord

Lisa Anderson McCord - January 19, 2014 at 04:34 PM



“ Our prayers and thoughts are with the Binsfeld family. My wife, Terese and Connie were cousins. My family has many fond memories with Connie and Jack. Connie will always be remembered for her compassion and love.

Jim Chopp and Family

James Chopp - January 19, 2014 at 02:03 PM



“ My condolences to the Binsfeld Family! I will never forget her assistance during our fuel contamination at On The Narrows Marina! She was truly a great Lady and will be sorely missed! John Young

John Young - January 17, 2014 at 11:30 AM



“ I send my heartfelt condolences to the entire BINSFELD family...i will always have fond memories of my 'almost Mom in law.'..she was always so very sweet to me!! God bless you all....Nadine Morden Jones...

Nadine Morden Jones - January 16, 2014 at 03:22 PM



“ Please know of my sympathy and prayers for John and the extended Binsfeld family. I first met Connie on the train that came from Munising through Newberry (my hime town) on our way to Siena Heights in Adrian in 1941.. It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship, although in recent years we have not been in close contact. I have many treasured memories of her and much pride in her accomplishments. May she rest in peace. Sister Nadine Foley, OP, Adrian Dominican Sisters.

S. Nadine Foley - January 16, 2014 at 01:25 PM



“ Our deepest sympathies to the Binsfeld family. My mother, Patricia Berube Bovan, has always spoken highly of Connie and has many fond memories of her growing up. May your memories comfort you at this time.

The Patricia Berube Bovan family

Jane Hock - January 16, 2014 at 12:42 PM



“ We are sorry to hear of the Lt Governors passing. We taught school with Greg at Peck High School and remember Greg's conversations about her when she was starting her political career. The State of Michigan has lost a great advocate of children

Bob and Kathy duBois - January 15, 2014 at 07:56 PM