



Gerald Frederick Stanek

December 18, 1918 - May 29, 2013

Gerald Frederick Stanek, 94, of Traverse City passed away Wednesday, May 29, 2013 at Munson Medical Center. Gerald was born on December 18, 1918 in Traverse City to the late John J. and Gertrude (Heimforth) Stanek. He was raised on the Stanek Homestead in Leelanau County. On October 7, 1939, in Traverse City, he married his high school sweetheart, Peggy Evelyn Hicks, who predeceased him on October 12, 1997. A sister, Virginia Woods, also predeceased him.

Gerald graduated from Traverse City High School in 1936. He then attended Alma College until he was drafted to play minor league baseball for the Milwaukee Brewer's. He proudly served his country in the U.S. Navy during World War II. After the war, Gerald returned to Leelanau County, where he worked on the farm with his Dad. In 1960, he purchased the farm from his Dad and moved his family from Traverse City to the Leelanau County homestead.

Gerald was one of the first cherry farmers to utilize mechanical harvesting in his cherry orchards. In 1969, he built the Stanek and Sons Processing Plant, which was one of the first on-the-farm cherry processing plants in the state of Michigan. He loved working on the farm, and in later years enjoyed driving through the orchards to see the cherries and apples. After retirement and up until two years ago, you could see him on his tractor with his big mower, mowing most of South Leelanau County.

Gerald was one of the founding members of The Great Lakes Cherry Production Board, was a lifetime member of the Michigan State University Horticultural Society and one of the ten founders of the MSU Research Station. Gerald belonged to the Elks Lodge #323 for 69 years, where he was a past Exalted Ruler. He loved to play golf and was a life member of the Traverse City Golf and Country Club, where he was Chairman of the Green Committee for many years. He also served for many years as the Secretary of the Northwest Michigan Harness Racing Association, and was a member of the Knife and Fork Club.

Gerald was an avid sports fan, and never missed watching his family compete in sports, whether on the ski hill, the football field or the golf course. He was a basketball official for the MHSAA and was the first official, who lived north of Grand Rapids to referee a State Final Game.

Surviving are his two sons; John (Pamela) Stanek and Jerry (Pegy) Stanek; four grandsons; Jeff (Charly) Stanek, Joshua (Meagan) Stanek, Nicholas Stanek, and John Stanek; four great-grandchildren; Andie, Colby, Ryan, and Lauryn. Also surviving are two nieces, Linda and Vicky; a nephew, Randy (Joanie) Woods; and cousins, Arlene Weitz and Jean Bensley.

An Elks Memorial Service and gathering will be held on Saturday, June 1, 2013 from Noon-2:00 p.m. at the Elks Lodge #323, 625 Bay St., Traverse City, MI 49684. A private committal service took place in Oakwood Cemetery.

Memorial donations may be made to the Elks National Foundation, the Wounded Warriors Project, or the Leelanau Conservancy.

Please feel free to share your thoughts and memories with Gerald's family at <http://www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com>.

The family is being served by Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home.

Cemetery

Oakwood Cemetery

1325 East Eighth Street
Traverse City, MI, 49686

Events

JUN **Memorial Gathering** 12:00PM - 02:00PM

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Elks Lodge #323

625 Bay St., Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

Comments



“ To the Stanek Family and friends,
I met Mr. Stanek 50 years ago, and called him Mr. Stanek in 1963. When I was old enough to call him Gerald, it never seemed quite right.
I first saw him on the ski hills back in my high school days and had immediate respect, and some fear to go along with it. He wasn't scary, in fact really nice, but I also saw him when he meant business. We all listened for sure, especially during cherry harvests as I came to find out later.
When I finally came to meet Gerald..er..Mr. Stanek at Bilmar's sports in the fall of 63, he outfitted me with all my new racing gear for the mighty Tomahawk Ski Team of NMC. Head Comps, Strolz boots, Marker LDR's with 7 foot thongs, eventually stretched to 8. He knew his stuff and made be a better ski racer that year.
A couple months later I spent the evening of November 22nd 1963 with the Stanek family here in town while my family was living in the Detroit area. We were at the home of Walter Lantz, then owner of Bilmar's. It was a Friday night I'll never forget and was so glad Mr. and Mrs. Stanek were there for my goofy barely 18 year old self. The school was empty, most everyone left for their hometowns, and I wasn't wanting to deal with that day alone.
I am proud to have known Gerald.....Mr. Stanek, and no doubt better for it. I'll miss him and miss seeing him working and mowing all that land he cared for.
On one more note, having walked our many dogs through the orchards at the family farm for so many years you notice things. The rows always looked great and the land was immaculate. Dogs are wonderful judge of people too, perhaps better than us. Eight Blumenfeld dogs have walked the Stanek blocks for awhile now, and every dog took a shine to Gerald, and he to them. Once 150 lb Wolfhound Molly gave him a start one day when she goosed him while he was pruning, but they became friends too.

With much love,
Sandy Blumenfeld Family and family

sandy blumenfeld - June 07, 2013 at 03:16 PM



“ So sorry to hear of Jerry's passing. I deeply appreciate him as a mentor and guide in my early years. It was always great to talk baseball with him!
Jeff Send

Jeff Send - June 02, 2013 at 12:45 PM



“ We send our most sincere condolences to the Stanek family on the loss of your dear Gerald. He accomplished much in his life and wasn't afraid to step out and do whatever it took to get the job done. As fellow cherry growers, we can certainly appreciate all the hard work and dedication it takes to be a successful fruit grower and processor. Gerald was innovative and resourceful. He gave of himself to many organizations over the years in community service, and even to youth as a basketball official --- most commendable for sure.

For the past few years, we enjoyed his presence at Woodside Village, and a large presence it was. All the residents and staff grew very fond of Gerald, and we certainly enjoyed our visits with him. He was always upbeat and friendly, with a big smile and hearty laugh. We all shall truly miss him, especially his table partners in the dining room. They conveyed their profound sense of loss yesterday as we talked about the loss of Gerald. Nadine would like to have a memorial service at his last "home" for our residents to express their sorrow and loss. We will keep Gerald's family and close friends in our thoughts and prayers, and may he now rest in peace in the Big Orchard in the sky!

Fondly,
Glenn and Judy LaCross

Judy LaCross - June 01, 2013 at 12:07 PM