



Harry Frederick Lipka

October 27, 1936 - March 25, 2014

Harry Lipka, 77, of Traverse City, died March 25, 2014, at the home of his daughter and son-in-law in Leelanau County. His parents, Edith (Pizzimenti) and Harry, as well as his wife of almost 50 years, Marlene (Sterchi) predeceased him. He is survived by his daughters and their spouses: Marie Walker Livernois (Ted), Suzanne (Richard) Rubin, Cindy Lipka, and Cheryl (Kent) Rice; grandchildren Haley (Marvin) Barnes, Lee (Candace) Marvin, Lisa Walker, Laura (Scott) Barnett, Zoe Rice, Annika Rice, and Meghan Rice; and great-grandchildren Danielle Barnes, Mason Barnes, Payton Barnes, Chayson Barnes, Jackson Norgaard, and Bryn Marvin.

Born in Detroit, Harry was the only child of two doting parents. He was the center of the universe to both sets of grandparents (one Italian and one German), who lived nearby, along with several aunts and uncles. He loved to draw. Growing up in “The Motor City,” he spent many hours designing futuristic-looking automobiles.

He was kind to all, with an amazing reverence for life. He wouldn't kill even a spider, taking them outside if they were found trespassing. He loved animals, and always had a dog (or two), not to mention chickens, ducks, bunnies, and goats. He enjoyed his outdoor ponds filled with frogs and fish, tending them conscientiously. There was always plenty to be found at the numerous bird feeders surrounding his house.

Harry's sense of humor is legendary. Always a practical joker, he regularly spoofed friends and family. He told the best stories, and nothing was better than a good laugh. Once he traded a friend ex-lax for chocolate while they were at the movies. On the way home, the friend suddenly started running, very fast. Until it became apparent that resistance was futile. After that, he walked. V-e-r-y . . . s-l-o-w-l-y.

He met Marlene, the love of his life, at Denby High School, a magnet school for students interested in the arts. They were married in 1957 at Assumption Grotto Cathedral. Even Marlene was not immune to his practical jokes, and was at a disadvantage until she learned enough Italian to fend for herself.

He later studied Art and Political Science at Wayne State University, working for the Wayne County Department of Social Services. The family moved to Traverse City in 1972, where he and Marlene were able to build their dream home on the hill. They were strong and independent, as they had to be, living up on that hill! They were ahead of their time, with core values of self-sufficiency and “living green.”

Harry retired from the State of Michigan in 1991, to follow his true passion as a nature and portrait photographer. His photography won many awards, but he was especially pleased to display it at North Peak, where everybody knew his name.

Besides his family and pets, “Paki’s” interests were myriad: reading (Sherlock Holmes was a favorite), the visual arts, music, the woods, the water, and living in Traverse City. However, in later years, he developed a distinct contempt and loathing for snow. Those who know him will fondly recall that special term he coined for it. He enjoyed visiting his favorite haunts daily, stopping for a coke to catch up with friends. He knew everyone’s story and empathized with their struggles. In turn, people knew him wherever he went.

He would want us to thank his family, friends, and caregivers, especially Hospice of Michigan, for all their tender support and expertise. They made it possible for him to remain at home with his family, which was so important because he “couldn’t stand old people.” He needed to be among peers, laughing and celebrating. His best advice to his daughters was, “Don’t ever get old.” Ultimately, he died of a broken heart, mourning all the things we lose as we age.

Harry brought an intensity and passion to all he pursued, leaving an indelible impression. He will be dearly missed, though the best of his talents and virtues live on in those whom he touched. “It’s elementary, Dear Watson If you eliminate all other factors, the one that remains must be the truth.” And what remains, the truth, is this: he was a kind, gentle, and good man.

A celebration of Harry’s life will be held at Immaculate Conception Church in Traverse City, at 11:00 AM, on Friday, March 28th. A luncheon follows. Donations may be made to the Cherryland Humane Society of Traverse City, at <http://www.cherrylandhumane.org/youcanhelp/donations/donate.php>.

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

Arrangements for the family have been entrusted to Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home and Cremation Services.

Cemetery

Oakwood Cemetery

1325 East Eighth Street
Traverse City, MI, 49686

Events

MAR **Visitation** 06:00PM - 07:00PM

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Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home
305 Sixth St, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

MAR **Rosary** 07:00PM - 08:00PM

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Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home
305 Sixth St, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

MAR **Funeral Service** 11:00AM - 12:00PM

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Immaculate Conception Catholic Church
308 Cedar Street, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

Comments



“ My condolences to you all. I knew Harry in many ways. We met when we worked for the Dept of Social Services downstate. Later, we reconnected when we both ended up in Traverse City: he had become a "serious" photographer and I was working in the Camera Shop. Again in 1997, we both were receiving radiation treatments for cancer and saw each other frequently at the Biederman Cancer Treatment Center. What a small world! I certainly agree that Harry was compassionate for all creatures. Even if we ran into each other in the grocery store parking lot, he always wanted to know how I was doing and took the time to visit. I now realize that it's been quite a while since I'd seen him. I'm sorry that he will not be living with us anymore, but he has certainly left many great memories to his extended family.

Cynthia Turner - April 04, 2014 at 10:44 AM



“ So sorry to hear of Harry's passing. I always looked forward to Harry's visit from Regional Office to our office. He was a voice of calm and reason in the chaos of Social Services. He was kind, a good listener, and a compassionate man.
Chloe Gereaux McGehee (Adult Services, Manistee DSS & Benzie, retired)

Chloe McGehee - March 30, 2014 at 04:27 PM



“ We have very fond memories of Harry (and Marlene). Marlene taught piano to all three of our sons. Harry and Marlene helped make them the young men they are today. Our boys enjoyed seeing Harry at many of these lessons and they valued his friendship and his honest interest in their lives. Mark and Ann Smith (and Owen, Colin, and Jesse)

ann smith - March 30, 2014 at 01:59 PM



“ TO HARRY LIPKA FAMILY: MY SINCERE CONDOLENCES FOR THE LOSS OF A VERY SPECIAL PERSON. I WORKED WITH HARRY FOR SEVERAL YEARS WITH THE STATE OF MICHIGAN AND CONSIDERED IT A PRIVILEGE TO KNOW HIM; THE KINDNESS AND CARING WERE SO VERY SPECIAL AND HE WILL BE REMEMBERED. THANK YOU. JOAN MARTIN

JOAN MARTIN - March 30, 2014 at 11:34 AM



“ The day was always made better, brighter, and happier when Harry Lipka crossed your path. My deepest condolences to everyone in Harry's family - immediate and extended.

With heartfelt sympathy,
Tim Moeggenberg

Tim Moeggenberg - March 28, 2014 at 01:47 PM



“ Thank you, Tim. That's so nice to hear.

Marie Walker - March 29, 2014 at 02:28 PM



“ I read the paper today and our family is greatly saddened by your loss. Your parents have left a huge mark of goodness in our memories and hearts. Both of your parents influenced my son for over 11years of piano lessons and the last was up on the hill!
I had dug up some old recital pictures, though Harry not in pics he was always there in the background smiling and carrying conversation.
Greatly missed.
Susan and son Traceford LaRose.

Susan LaRose - March 28, 2014 at 07:51 AM



“ Thank you, Susan. You guys were always one of their favorites.

Marie Walker - March 29, 2014 at 02:30 PM



“ I love this picture of Harry. He will be missed by the Elks staff. Thank you for sharing him with us.

Terri Kuhlman - March 28, 2014 at 03:18 AM



“ I am so sorry for your loss. Harry and Marlene were good people. As good as they come.

Jennifer - March 29, 2014 at 02:18 PM



“ Terri, Thank you so much. I'm sure he will be at The Elks Club in spirit, if not in body!

Marie Walker - March 29, 2014 at 02:31 PM