



Michael John Dingeman

October 21, 1958 - March 17, 2019

TRAVERSE CITY – Michael J. Dingeman, of Traverse City Michigan, died Sunday, March 17, 2019, at the age of 60, with his loving mother Ruth E. Dingeman and long-time caregiver and friend Brenda Rice by his side. He was born on October 21, 1958, in Heidelberg, Germany.

Although Michael lived nearly his entire life challenged by a degenerative neurological disorder, he remarkably kept a positive attitude towards life with a broad smile and a twinkle in his eyes. He chose humor and wit over self-pity and didn't miss a chance to make others laugh. Mike would always ask visitors to tell him of their latest adventures and listened with great interest. His profound grace inspired and continues to inspire, many to face their adversities with bravery, perseverance, and positivity.

Michael had a lifelong interest in cars although he could never drive. By the time he graduated from Traverse City Central High School in 1977, his collection of Corgi die-cast cars was over 500; by the time he was 25, it was over 1,000 cars—a challenging endeavor in a pre-internet world. Over his life, he bought and sold thousands of die-cast Corgis and other collectible model cars with other enthusiasts throughout the world. Michael also worked for over ten years at the Northwestern Michigan Council of Governments where he assisted displaced workers to find new employment.

Michael frequently traveled to Europe during his lifetime, most often to Germany, where there were many relatives on his mother's side. Along with his father John H. Dingeman, they searched the German countryside looking for "that one special vintage Mercedes". Many winters were spent in Florida too, which meant Michael could tour the various car dealerships and dream of driving. When he had a chance to fly in a vintage open-air biplane, he convinced the pilot to make nearly all of the flight upside down over the ocean so he could experience weightlessness.

Michael is survived by his mother Ruth E. Dingeman, Grand Rapids, Michigan and Heidelberg, Germany, his brother, Daniel J. Dingeman, Traverse City, Michigan and Key

West, Florida; nephews Jack Dingeman, Key West, Florida, Max Dingeman, Traverse City, Michigan niece Hope Dingeman, Royal Oak, Michigan; his uncle R. Paul Dingeman, St. Clair, Michigan, aunt Ursula Windisch, Heidelberg, Germany; cousins Katie Dingeman Cerda of Los Angeles, California, Monica Anderson of Lansing, Michigan, Iska Gans of Heidelberg, Germany, Monica Windisch of Heidelberg, Germany; and his former sister-in-law Denine Dingeman of Traverse City, Michigan. He was predeceased in death by his father, John H. Dingeman.

A Memorial Mass of Christian Burial will take place on Friday, April 26, 2019, at 11:00 am at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church with Father James Hayden presiding.

In lieu of flowers, Michael wished memorials would be directed to the Carmelite Monastery.

Events

APR **Visitation** 10:00AM - 11:00AM

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Immaculate Conception Church

308 N. Cedar Street, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

APR **Mass of Christian Burial** 11:00AM

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Immaculate Conception Church

308 N. Cedar Street, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

Comments



“ An external video has been added.



Reynolds Jonkhoff Funeral Home & Cremation Services - April 26, 2019 at 08:07 AM



“ I was a Caregiver for Mike in the late 80s in 1990. When I moved from the area I would check in when I was home to visit. He used to love going to Coney Castle on 8th street and Mr Phillys on grocery days. He always had a smile on his face even when he didn't feel well. I lived on the parade route and even after I was no longer employed I would pick him up and drive him to my apartment in his van to watch the Heritage Parade. My heart was saddened to learn of his passing even though years had already passed. I'm sure he is sitting on the best cloud with L.F. in his lap once again. I'm glad I was a part of his life. He taught me how to appreciate all that you have in life. I treasure my time with him as a gift. So long Mike, until we meet again.

May - May 16 at 07:59 PM



“ I am sorry to have missed the Memorial Mass for Michael. We have known Michael and his family from his early childhood. He was always so alert and interested, with good nature. We treasured his friendship, and send our regards to his mother, Ruth, and brother, Dan. and family.

Blessings,
Connie Sarya

Connie Sarya - April 27, 2019 at 01:15 PM



“ Mike and I met in 1992 at a Decolores Mens retreat. Watching Mike from a distance on that first day I saw an engaging Smiling person laughing with three others as he sat in his wheelchair. I was compelled to understand his joy and peace which resulted in a lifelong friendship.

I learned it was many things for Mike that brought his joy for life, a caring heart for others, the ability to move on from hard things, a rock solid faith in our Father's love and presence, a sense of humor, the ability to simply call his situation a inconvenience NOT a handicap and more!

We met often and at times not often enough. But when we did get together. we spoke from the heart, shared laughter and gave each other a hard time.

We encouraged one another. There were days when I was overwhelmed with running a business or issues with one of our seven Children and Mike brought me back to earth. Then there were days that Mike was ready to explode or just feling down and I brought him encouragement.

In life there are acquaintances, friends, and then there are "best friends". I have only a few close best friends and Mike runs out ahead in that category. In fact, Mike is now running out front from heaven.

Mike you make me smile. I know you were ready to be home. We will join you on that day He calls us home.

YF Rich Raetz

M

Richard Raetz - April 25, 2019 at 08:56 PM



“ Dearest Mike you know I always adored you. You and I had many wonderful memories we shared at Camp Roy El. We went to nursery school together and I was blessed to work for you for a couple years. Through Munson in home health and privately as well. You are a kind, caring, funny and a very sweet gentleman. I have had the pleasure of living on the peninsula with you and the love of music and Interlochen. I knew Max because he and my son Khrish went to school together to. And I was blessed to go to school with Dan as well technically I was ment to graduate in class of 1979 just like Dan and mark. I've had the pleasure of knowing your whole family. I'm gonna miss your smiling face forever and your soft spoken voice. But in Heaven you are 100% young and perfectly whole again you can jump, run, walk and play as you once did and Jack (John) is waiting there for you with open arms waiting to be together once again. You can finally be painless and in control of your own life again I know that was always important to you. Rest in beautiful peace dear friend. I will miss you so much.

Molly Marie Miske - April 25, 2019 at 04:32 PM



“ Mike I always adored you you were funny, caring kind and a gentleman. I'm really gonna miss you. We went to Camp Roy El for many years and we attended nursery school together as well I was blessed to care for your smiling self for a couple years and I was also blessed to go to school with Dan and I was blessed to know and love you both and your family I'm gonna miss you very much but you can walk, run And gain all your physical activities again cause in Heaven we are young and whole again rest in beautiful peace dear friend.

Molly Marie Miske - April 25, 2019 at 04:17 PM



“ I know Mike as a very independent person. He knew he must be strong and He was very strong. With his family and friends help He was able to live his own way on his conditions. Thank you Mike for your life, for your wisdom, for your sense of humor, for your help and please take care, from Heaven, of people who loves you all the time.
Love, Agatka.

Agata Serafin - April 25, 2019 at 06:52 AM



“ Thank you for the lovely note Agatka. Mike cherished the special relationship with you both shared.

Daniel J. - April 27, 2019 at 07:34 AM



“ I met Michael in 2003 and when I was asked to come to his home to do massage therapy for him. In the beginning I was there 3 times a week and over the years it dropped down to once a week. There are 3 things he said to me along the way that stand out the most.

1. I did ask him on several occasions about his passing and what he would like me to say at his memorial service. His response, " Say I liked your coleslaw." And he really did love it , asking me often to bring it by.

2. " If God where standing at the end of my bed and told me I could walk or have this life I have, which one would I choose?" I didn't have to think about that at all. I know he would choose the life he had, because he felt it was his purpose in life to show others how to be grateful and positive under any circumstances.

3. "In my dreams I am always walking." When I heard of his passing, I saw him as a young strong man with his dark black hair walking boldly into and happily into his next adventure.

I love you , my friend, and am happy for your new strides.

Francine Sandell

Francine Sandell - April 17, 2019 at 07:28 AM



“ I grew up with Mike and his brother Dan, spending so much time together in our youth. I remember the Indy Car style snowmobile his dad got him, it was the bomb! Mike and I used to play so much Monopoly together as well. I seem to recall always owning Park Place and Boardwalk, taking all of his money. I can also remember when Mike was able to walk. I remember our families staying at a German themed hotel by the old Osteopathic Hospital with Mike, Dan and I running around the halls. Now, Mike is not constrained by his wheelchair, and can fly and soar with the angels. RIP Mike.

Chris Ahart - April 11, 2019 at 05:56 PM



“ Mike was a hero to the class of '77. When he wheeled across the stage to accept his diploma he received a standing ovation. I will never forget that moment and the energy Mike created for our class on that day and beyond. At his 50th birthday party I had the honor of helping him judge the classic cars that had been brought in to create a car show for him. His sense of humor and the twinkle in his eye was on full display. I cherish that day. What a life well lived!

Tammy Hagerty

Tammy Hagerty - April 06, 2019 at 09:09 AM



“ I am very sorry to learn of Mike's passing. I remember him from Eastern Elementary, always smiling. Lost touch after that. I graduated with Dan not knowing whatever became of his brother. I'm glad he could travel and collect his cars. It sounds like he had a rather full life despite his impairment. What a shame he has died so young. He will be missed. My condolences to his family.

Betsy Galloway Hadley

Marana, AZ

Betsy Galloway Hadley - April 09, 2019 at 11:47 PM



“ Mike had the pleasure in growing up in what we would call today “old Traverse City”. He attended Eastern Elementary School where he started to make what would become some of his lifelong friends.

Mike quickly came to terms with his physical challenges and disliked the word Handicapped and instead would say that he had an Inconvenience. Sometimes this inconvenience brought with it small perks like during family trips to Disney World when they would always be advanced to the head of the lines. Mike and his brother Dan loved that they thought they just had a greatest thing going.

Many summers Mike would enjoy a week in the outdoors at Camp Roy-EI, Twin Lakes. Along with the annual gathering of friends there was also the promise of a hike to the top of the sand dunes. Mike’s brother Dan, also attended as a “Teen-aider”.

After graduating from Traverse City Central high school in 1977, Mike attended college at NMC and lived in the campus dormitories independently. After college, Mike worked for the NW Michigan Council of Governments where he made many new friends including John McDonald. Also as a young adult Mike became a member of DeColores, a Christ based men’s group, here he met Rich Raetz. These two men became close lifelong friends of Michael’s and both visited him March 17th, the day he passed on.

When the opportunity arose Mike stepped up to the role of UNCLE. He was an amazing uncle being Godfather to Jack our oldest yet just as supportive and interested in Max and Hope that arrived. He loved family and was always with us for Sunday dinner and holidays. Mike shared his love of collecting by buying special collectable cars and dolls for the kids. He told them to take care of them and they would someday pay their way through college. He had a wonderful sense of humor and without much effort taught them things about life they would never find in a book. They loved Uncle Mike and miss him dearly.

With Mike’s Inconvenience you may think it also brought with it limitations - not so. Mike touched many lives and lived each day to its fullest. I recently learned that for years now, Central High School’s cross country team had created a support strategy on a route called “The Smile Mile”. It came about some years ago while on their training run on the peninsula, a few students figured out that from Mike’s smiley face mailbox on Peninsula Dr. back to the high school was exactly one mile and at this point they were usually low on energy and motivation. The tradition started with a tap on the smiley face mailbox and a shout, Smile Mile! and runners within earshot banded together and sprinted back to school. The coaches look to this as great team building and encourage the practice be passed on to the incoming athletes each year. Mike continues to touch lives. And his life deserves to be celebrated.

When Mike’s close friend Rich learned of his passing he exclaimed with genuine joy...”Mike is up there dancing”! Yes, a life well lived, when you think of Mike, smile.

We all have much thankfulness for all of the care givers that have assisted him to live

independently. Most recently, Brenda, Ronda and Sylvia - and over time too many to name. However, they will be forever appreciated.

With much love, Denine

Denine - April 03, 2019 at 04:34 PM