



Dr. Vernon "Vern" Lee Oxender

July 29, 1934 - May 28, 2013

Dr. Vernon "Vern" Lee Oxender, 78 of Williamsburg, died Tuesday, May 28 2013 at his home surrounded by his loving family.

Vern was born on July 29, 1934 in Constantine, MI to the late Harry and Myrtle (Sherck) Oxender. He married Lorraine Berak on August 17, 1995 at Walt Disney World in Florida.

Vern knew hard work from a young age. He had an amazing ability to stay positive – giving every endeavor his best, and inspiring others to do the same. Growing up, he and his brothers rose at dawn each day to milk cows and fed calves before school. He earned his BA degree in Math, Science and English at Manchester College, while delivering milk each day at 3:30 am, studying German and Calculus II, teaching math at an area high school, and maintaining a 4.0 GPA. His perfect score on his graduate admissions test preceded his Masters of Education at Ball State University and eventual Ed.D from Wayne State University. Vern eventually took on administrative positions as Principal of Bryant Junior High in Livonia, and continued as Deputy Superintendent of Birmingham Public Schools, and Superintendent of Haslett Schools. But the high point of his career was becoming Superintendent of Traverse City Area Public Schools. While in Traverse City he also served a valued professor at Central Michigan University, and Michigan State University.

Vern was a devoted family man, traveling to 47 of the 50 states with his family camping and teaching his children the wonders and history of this great country, and eventually traveled all over the world with them. While working with his wife at CMU they took student teachers to Australia and England.

Vern deliberately settled in Traverse City to enjoy the hunting and fishing opportunities that are abundant in the area. He and his son Dorin cherished their annual deer hunting trips, once resulting in a record-book buck for Vern. He shared his love of the seasonal salmon run with his son Daniel and the joys of lake living with wife Lorraine and daughters Dee and Kristy. Of course, no remembrance of Vern would be complete without mention of his

garden and his love for the sweet-corn he raised that all his grandchildren enjoyed.

Vern was a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Elk Rapids, and also the Rotary Club. He served many years on the Board of Child and Family Services and the IAA. He was also proud to train and educate many of the local area leaders through the Grand Traverse Chamber of Commerce Leadership Program.

Surviving Vern is his wife, Dr. Lorraine Berak, son Daniel (Svetlana) Oxender, daughter Dr. Deanna (David) Burgess, son, Dorin (Shelia) Oxender, stepdaughter, Kristy (Stephen) McDonald, grandchildren, William and Elizabeth Oxender, Jordan and Nick Burgess, Shea Oxender, Harper Daigh, Sophia and Ian McDonald, siblings, Dr. Wayne Oxender, Joan (Jim) Lindsley, and Glen (Dianne) Oxender, sister-in-law Jean Oxender and many other loving family members, friends and devoted caregivers.

Vern is preceded in death by his parents and brother Dr. Dale Oxender.

Visitation for Vern will be held from 6:30 to 8:30pm at the Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral home on Friday, May 31, 2013. A funeral service will be held at the First Presbyterian Church in Elk Rapids on Saturday, June 1, 2013 at 11am. The Rev. Andrew Martinez will serve as officiant. Memorial contributions may be directed to the Vernon L. Oxender Scholarship Fund at the Manchester College in Indiana or Central Michigan University Immokalee Student Teaching Fund. Please sign Vern's online guestbook at <http://www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com>. The family is being served by the Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home.

Events

MAY **Visitation** 06:00PM - 08:00PM

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

JUN **Memorial Service** 11:00AM

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First Presbyterian Church
404 Spruce St., Elk Rapids, MI, US, 49629

Comments



“ I am saddened to learn of Vern's passing. He was a very important and stabilizing influence on my life, especially the high school years. He always generous and treated me like family. His great sense of humor and composure I will always remember.

To the Oxender family, please accept my sincere sympathy for your loss.

Kenton Storey - 10-17-14

Kenton L. Storey - October 18, 2014 at 01:44 PM



“ It was a great pleasure to know and work with Vern on state education issues. Using his intellect, his problem-solving skills and his wonderful sense of humor he shaped and influenced Michigan education in a most positive way. We were the better for his work here; we are the poorer for his loss.

Michael Emlaw
Retired Colleague Superintendent
Past-President Michigan Association of School Administrators

Michael Emlaw - June 03, 2013 at 07:22 PM



“ Lorraine,
I'm sorry I just learned of Vern's passing. Vern was a good man and a wonderful educator. One of my fondest memories of Vern is shortly after he learned that Tom and I were planning to get married in 1997, he arrived at the Rotary Club meeting with a photo album of your wedding at Disney World. I remember him saying how much fun it was and how he hoped that Tom and I could enjoy the same kind of some wonderful second marriage that the two of you shared. I'm so glad that you had some beautiful years together. Please accept my sympathy for your loss.
Marsha

Marsha Smith - June 03, 2013 at 02:39 PM



“ Video Tribute - Press Play To Watch



Reynolds Jonkhoff Funeral Home - June 03, 2013 at 09:49 AM



“ We have been fishing in Canada, returned on Saturday, June 1 and learned the very sobering news of Vern's death. He was a true leader and inspiration to his staff and community. I am proud to have be part of his early experiences in Traverse City. We had some great fishing trips where one really got to know the essence of Vern. He was always thinking of how to better TCAPS for students and staff. I feel very fortunate to have had the privilage of knowing and learning from Vern.

Dave Dye

Dave Dye - June 02, 2013 at 08:11 AM



“ Although deeply saddened by the loss of Vern, we fondly remember the days working with the influence of his progressive leadership. He was the best superintendent with whom we ever worked. Vern always felt more like a colleague than a boss. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family.
Stan and Patti Ronk

Patti Ronk - June 01, 2013 at 08:47 AM



“ A true statesman

Mary Ann Kerzich - June 01, 2013 at 10:07 AM



“ Vern's leadership in education touched the lives in many positive ways for thousands of students and educators. His contributions will be remembered by those of us fortunate to work with him.

Mike McIntyre

Mike McIntyre - May 31, 2013 at 08:11 AM



“ Dr. Oxender was a fine person and a great Superintendent. Traverse City was fortunate to have him as a leader for so many years. My condolences to Lorraine and the rest of the family in the loss of this man. Cathy Griffin

Cathy griffin - May 30, 2013 at 08:39 PM



“ Dr. Oxender touched many lives (including my own). I am fortunate to have worked with him. My thoughts are with the family. - Glenn Solowiej

Glenn Solowiej - May 30, 2013 at 07:13 PM



“ Vern was my friend for 65 years from our days in church youth groups, to church camp, to college at Manchester and then many great times with our two families together. We shared many experiences over our lifetimes together and although our lives diverged in the past 20 years or so, the influence of a good friend stays with me. Mim and I send our condolences to the three Oxender children and Lorraine and pray for comfort. Jim Robbins

Jim Robbins - May 30, 2013 at 04:52 PM



“ Vernon and his brother Dale were instrumental in allowing us to grow our fledgling farming operation in the 1970s. Providing an opportunity to rent and later purchase land from them helped build a base for our enterprise. As their father before them, both brothers encouraged a sense of stewardship and respect for the land. With a nod to the Oxender family, we have recently renamed our farm operation, "Legacy Land Farms". Dale and Sally Stuby

Dale and Sally Stuby - May 30, 2013 at 08:59 AM



“ It has been a privilege to know Vern and we have many great memories of visiting him and his family in Williamsburg. Our thoughts and prayers to Vern's family and friends. Know he is smiling down on you now.

Margarete Chalker - May 29, 2013 at 02:54 PM



“ Lorraine, Kristy and Family-

I remember Vern as an educational leader who worked with everyone in the school district to make it better for students, teachers and families. His passion and dedication "got things done" and TCAPS is better today because of his leadership in the past.

My thoughts & love are with you all - Chris Esper

Chris Esper - May 29, 2013 at 07:03 PM