



## William 'Bill' Kirschke

April 29, 1934 - December 11, 2018

William Hermann Kirschke passed away the evening of Tuesday, December 11, at Munson Hospice House, after a long and well-fought battle with prostate cancer.

Bill was many things to many people: he was a loving husband to Jane (Freeman) Kirschke for almost 60 years, and a loving father to Brian, Mark, and Annie.

He was generous beyond belief, willing to volunteer his time, money, or spirit to anyone he knew, always ready to help out a neighbor, or fix something for someone. He made friends of strangers everywhere that he went.

The list of his achievements and activities is long and varied. He was an avid model train hobbyist, actively involved in the Northern Michigan Railroad Club and the Festival of Trains for many years. The media always adored him and found him at these events, which sometimes made for suppressed giggling by professional newscasters. He was on the Board of "Save Our Downtown", caring deeply that Traverse City remain a unique and charming place to live. Until his diagnosis he was a lifelong blood donor for the Red Cross. He also volunteered for the Film Festival for many years.

He loved to work on construction projects, building a family cottage on Elk Lake, helping finish his kids' houses, building shadow boxes, and garden hods. He was creative and could build anything, and do it well. In 2012 his garden was featured in the Friendly Garden Club's Garden Walk. He loved butterflies and learned to collect and hatch monarchs. He shared that experience with neighborhood children and at a local nature center. The Fifth Street's annual block party was lucky to call him its Master Barbeque Chef for the last 17 years. He perfected a peanut brittle recipe and made deliveries each December to friends, neighbors, and acquaintances, anyone who made the "good" list. Born in Detroit, April 29, 1934 of German immigrant parents Willy Emil and Helene Neubauer Kirschke, he attended Wilbur Wright Vocational High School in Detroit, and, with the help of his brother, obtained a scholarship to attend Michigan State University. He started school there and took a break after two years to volunteer for service in the US Army 1954-1956 in Germany and was not a stranger to the Hofbrauhaus. He was a member of the "C" Company of the 15th Armored Infantry Battalion of the Fifth Armored Division.

Bill graduated from MSU, with a B.S. in Science and a Masters in Geology. Following

graduation he worked for Texaco in Texas and then later Consumers Power in Michigan. His group later became CMS Northern Michigan Exploration Oil and Gas and in 1974 Bill transferred to Traverse City and moved with his family “up north.” He retired after 32 years with the company.

He was preceded in death by his father Willy Emil Kirschke and his mother Helene Neubauer Kirschke, sister-in-law Bertha Kirschke, and brother-in-law Patrick Freeman.

Bill is survived by his wife Jane (Freeman) Kirschke, his children Brian (Nancy) Kirschke, Mark Kirschke, and Annie (Steve) Hiltner.

He also leaves his brother Winfred Max Albert (Rose) Kirschke, as well as grandchildren Sarah Hiltner, Ethan Hiltner, Tyler Kirschke, Kaylee (Tomash) Slovia, and Dustin Housh.

Visitation will be Monday, December 17, from 5-8 pm at Reynolds Jonkhoff Funeral Home, at 305 Sixth Street, in Traverse City.

A celebration of Bill’s life will be held at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, December 18, with a visitation beforehand at 10 a.m. at Reynolds Jonkhoff Funeral Home. A reception will follow the Celebration at the same location.

In lieu of flowers, or customary remembrances, please consider making a donation to one of the following organizations:

Munson Hospice, 1105 Sixth Street, Traverse City, MI 49684

Traverse Health Clinic, 1719 South Garfield Ave, Traverse City, MI 49686

The Father Fred Foundation, 826 Hastings Street, Traverse City, MI 49686

The family is being cared for and served by the Reynolds Jonkhoff Funeral Home and Cremation Services.

# Events

---

**DEC 17** **Visitation for friends and family** 05:00PM - 08:00PM

---

17

Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home

305 Sixth St, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

**DEC 18** **Visitation for friends and family** 10:00AM - 11:00AM

---

18

Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home

305 Sixth St, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

**DEC 18** **Celebration of Life** 11:00AM

---

18

Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home

305 Sixth St, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

# Comments

---



“ Our thoughts and prayers are with Jane and entire family, at the passing of Bill. We have years of wonderful memories of times with Bill and Jane. In recent years our Christmas caroling members were lucky recipients of his wonderful peanut brittle.  
Ray and Linda Asiala

**Linda Asiala** - January 01 at 08:46 PM

---



“ Spending time with Bill, whether meeting for lunch in Cadillac or spending time rv'ing, was a joy. Good conversation and many laughs. And Bill sure had a big hearty laugh! He will be missed by all who knew him. Our prayers go out to Jane and her family.



**Sam and Karen Joseph** - December 16, 2018 at 12:25 PM



“ Come on Bill kneel down

**Sam and Karen Joseph** - December 16, 2018 at 12:28 PM



“ It was an honor to know bill. He was a wonderful man. You have dicks and my condolences.

**April wascher** - December 18, 2018 at 04:02 PM

---



“ Jane and family, We are sad to find out that Bill has passed away. We met Bill and Jane thru Northern Lights RV club and enjoyed spending time with them. Bill showed us his train set-up in the basement, which he was very proud of. He is gone "to soon". Sue & Jerry Woller

**Jerry R Woller** - December 15, 2018 at 04:09 PM

---



“ As a close friend of his son Brian, I have the fondest memories of Bill Kirschke. An honest, grounded and hard working man who so often took his personal time to show interest and assist us in our teenage endeavors. Even those that were a bit misguided (smile). He seemed to sense we would still learn from them, so happily indulged us. Bill Kirschke will always remain a fixed and fond memory of my young years in Traverse City. I am proud to have known him. My best wishes to the

Kirschke family.

**Brett Content** - December 15, 2018 at 09:31 AM

---



“ Bob, Janet, Amy and Jeff purchased the Basket Full of Wishes for the family of William 'Bill' Kirschke.



**Bob, Janet, Amy and Jeff** - December 14, 2018 at 09:32 PM

---



“ I was a recipient of his famous peanut brittle, his humor and his kindness! Bill was a wonderful person and I loved seeing him interact with the kids everyday during the Festival of Trains. A good soul.

**Lori Puckett** - December 14, 2018 at 08:50 PM

---



“ Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of William 'Bill' Kirschke.



December 14, 2018 at 04:57 PM

---



“ Thinking of Jane and Bill's entire family. He will always be our "Mr. Fifth Street".  
Peace and love,  
Susan Odgers and Tom Mair 🦋

**susan odgers** - December 14, 2018 at 04:46 PM

---



“ One of the nicest people. Period. Mr. Kirschke was a great neighbor growing up in the "Traverse City" hood more than 40 years ago. It was nice to see him around every so often in town. Spoke to me like we still lived across the ally. Always same nice man. Peace and Good Health to the Kirschke Family

**Milan Baic** - December 14, 2018 at 11:47 PM