



Michael Karkotsky

September 10, 1926 - March 30, 2020

Obituary for Michael Karkotsky

"A Life Well Lived"

To know Michael Karkotsky was to experience overwhelming energy and exquisite joy as well as an intense passion for life itself. He was truly a radiant light, shining always with laughter, joy, and a certain quiet wisdom that spoke volumes. On March 30, 2020, this extraordinary light was extinguished here on earth and is now shining down on all of us from heaven. Affectionately known as Papa Mike and, more recently, Mr. Mike, he was blessed to walk this earth for more than 93 years, spreading his "one of a kind" spirit to both young and old alike!

Mr. Mike was born to John Karkotsky and Sophia Hereza Karkotsky on September 10, 1926 in Westmont, Illinois. It was there that he spent his entire childhood, relishing in his love of sports, and delighting in numerous exuberant shenanigans with his many cherished friends. And, from very early on, he spent a good part of his free time nurturing his love for the game of golf. He could often be found caddying an 18 hole match earning just a scant \$1 with an occasional 10¢ tip!

In 1944, Mr. Mike graduated from Hinsdale High School where he played football and shared his talent for singing in the choir. In his junior year he

enlisted in the Future Army Air Force program which heralded the beginning of his devoted service to the country he loved so much. He qualified for the Army Specialty Training Program at Michigan State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, now Michigan State University, in June of 1944 where he also studied Engineering. Upon completion of this program, he began basic training for the United States Army at Keesler Army Airfield in Biloxi, Mississippi. He was honorably discharged in November of 1948 moving on to serve in the Air Force as an Airman Basic Reservist before his honorable discharge in 1952.

Mr. Mike was awarded the World War II Victory Medal for Honor and Service to our Country in 1945. He also received the State of Illinois Service Recognition Certificate for Meritorious Service in 1947. His deep dedication and intense pride in serving our country as a World War II Veteran is one of Mr. Mike's most memorable attributes!

During the time of his service to our country, Mr. Mike also embarked on a career in engineering at the Western Electric Telecommunications Company which later became AT&T. He remained a devoted employee there until he retired some 40 years later.

And it was in his hometown of Westmont that, at the tender age of 20, he met and fell head over heels in love with Margaret (Marge) Venard, who he affectionately called his "Wildcat." Mr. Mike married his beloved Margie on November 20, 1948 in Downers Grove, Illinois. They lived in the Chicago suburbs until his job brought him way down south to the Atlanta, Georgia area in the early 1960s. Together, Mr. Mike and Marge raised 5 children of their own. In addition and over the course of their 52 year marriage, they opened their hearts and their home to 27 foster children who needed temporary residence while awaiting permanent placement elsewhere. Some stayed for just a brief time while others stayed for much longer. And one, Dan, who was

just a small child when he arrived, never left and eventually became a permanent part of the Karkotsky clan when he legally changed his name to theirs.

Mr. Mike leaves a great many people behind to treasure his precious memory especially his children Dan Karkotsky & wife Sharon, Tim Karkotsky, Therese (Terry) Karkotsky Abeln & husband Mike, Tamara (Tammy) Karkotsky Lindsey & husband George, and Patrick Karkotsky & wife Tina.

He also leaves his much beloved grandchildren and great grandson who are also holding their sweet Papa Mike in their hearts . . . Dana Karkotsky McFarland & husband Mitchell, Kim Karkotsky, Holly Karkotsky, Lindsay Abeln & Leo Ordonez, John Michael Abeln and Erin Abbey Gray, Rachel Lindsey, Daniel Karkotsky, Jonathan Karkotsky & fiancé Roxanne Amy, Andrew Karkotsky, and Melissa Karkotsky along with his much admired great-grandson Tristan Karkotsky.

Other family members who also dearly loved, and were equally loved by Mr. Mike, include his daughters-in-law Colene Oliver and Janet Crumley, his nieces Sonia Thompson & husband Duncan, and Patricia Schoenbeck, his great-nieces Sheila Fromer and Linda Veverka, and his great-nephews Joey and Paul Schoenbeck, as well as several extended members of his wife Marge's family.

Mr. Mike leaves a most admirable legacy of compassion, generosity, and unconditional love to his 27 foster children including Raymond Williams and Robert Bussey. He also leaves behind many, many friends who were very near and dear to his heart including Mrs. Rose Shuster whose husband Joe was Mr. Mike's childhood and long-time friend until his own passing, as well as all the special members of the entire Shuster family.

As our passing from this life leads us to the ultimate happiness of salvation, Mr. Mike now joins those he held close who preceded him in death including his dearly beloved wife--his "Wildcat"--Margaret Venard Karkotsky, his precious daughter Michaelene (Mickey) Karkotsky whom he missed so much, the parents he so treasured John and Sophia Karkotsky, his much admired siblings, brother John Karkotsky Jr. and sister Olga Karkotsky Hofmann & husband George, and Mrs. Jackie Jayne, his companion with whom he shared his life for many years after losing his beloved Margie. He also joins all the many members of Marge's family who were awaiting his arrival at Heaven's gate.

Mr. Mike's family would like to extend their most heartfelt and sincere thanks to all of Mr. Mike's friends and caregivers at The Brenntity of Fairhope Assisted Living Facility who not only respected him as he was but also loved him in ways we will always be grateful for. We would also like to recognize and thank all the many doctors, nurses, and staff who cared for Mr. Mike over the 3+ years he was blessed to call Fairhope his home. Our hearts are tremendously grateful for the incredibly compassionate and exceptionally skilled treatment he received from all his medical guardian angels, especially those at Fairhope's Thomas Hospital who cared for him during his final days.

Over his umpteen years of living, Mr. Mike enjoyed a multitude of activities. He loved all indoor and outdoor sports, especially swimming, body surfing, and ice skating. He gave hours of his time coaching young children in sports as well. But most of us will never forget the countless hours he spent playing his much beloved golf which, as a revered "scratch" golfer, brought him considerable joy and accomplishment!!!

Many will also remember how much he and his wife adored being a part of the German Dance Group in Atlanta. He was an expert, especially in dancing the Polka, and he always took great joy in remembering he and Marge's very first

dance at their local American Legion so long ago. He continued dancing even after he lost Marge and was so very sad when his knees finally convinced him it was time to "pass the torch."

But the most memorable recollections most people will likely have are of the awe-inspiring adventures he embarked upon each and every Christmas season, bringing the most incredible glee to people of all ages. It is widely known that Mr. Mike's true identity is that of being the "real" Santa Claus. Even his own children and grandchildren marveled at his intrinsic ability to convince adults and children alike that he WAS jolly old Kris Kringle. There is absolutely no question in anyone's mind that he truly possessed AND expressed the REAL meaning of Christmas! And he held all those wonderful memories close in his heart even up to his last breath!

Mr. Mike possessed a number of heartwarming and inspiring qualities as well as many unusual and often disconcerting idiosyncrasies. That's what made him who he was. The life lessons he gave us can indeed be grasped through the beautiful Prayer of Serenity. He taught us, first and foremost, to accept ourselves as we are, to then fearlessly work hard in changing the things we can, and with wisdom and persistence, to strive always in doing our very best. As he wrote years ago in his "A Father's Legacy, Life in Your Own Words" memory book, "Work hard, do your best, love your Mother, and always, always, try to be happy . . . not just for yourself but for everyone else!"

We, the family, have entrusted Cason Funeral Home with Mr. Mike's arrangements. A "Celebration of Life" Memorial Service will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, his home for 53 years, and will be scheduled as soon as our nation returns to good health and safety. In addition, a Memorial Mass will be celebrated at Christ the King Catholic Church in Daphne, Alabama, again, at a time to be determined.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to The Gary Sinise Foundation which honors our defenders, veterans, first responders, their families and those in need. Log on to www.garysinisefoundation.org to make a donation-- see below for instructions on how to donate in Mr. Mike's honor/memory. To share condolences online, please visit the Michael Karkotsky obituary located on the Cason Funeral Service website, www.casonfuneralservice.com.

Donations in honor of Mr. Mike can be done either online or via check. To donate online be sure to check the small checkbox, "Dedicate my donation in honor or in memory of someone." This is where you will be able to include an email address (terry.abeln@gmail.com) and name of the family member (Terry Abeln) you would like to notify. If you would like to include a physical address instead, please be sure to include the address in the "Message to recipient" box. A physical acknowledgement can then be sent to the designated family member.

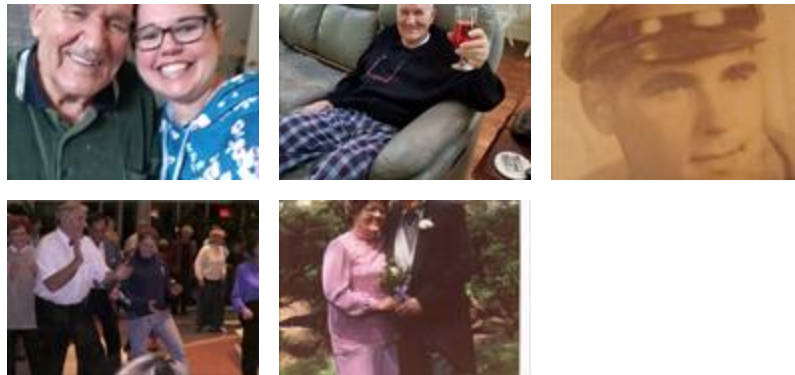
Check donations can be sent to the following address. Please be sure to include a note stating who the donation is in honor or in memory of. Please also include the name and email or physical address for the family member you would like notified of the donation.

Gary Sinise Foundation
P.O. Box 368
Woodland Hills, CA 91365

Tribute Wall

LI

“ 7 files added to the tribute wall



Lindsay - April 06, 2020 at 06:41 PM

TA

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Terry Abeln - April 06, 2020 at 05:39 PM

MJ

“ Maureen Kovitch Jackson lit a candle in memory of Michael Karkotsky



Maureen Kovitch Jackson - April 06, 2020 at 04:03 PM

MJ

“ Terry, Tammy and family,

What a remarkable human being your Dad was. I can attest to that fact due to having known him as a youngster from my OLA days and hanging around at the Karkotsky home. I was blessed to be a part of Terry and Mike's wedding day and even remember at the reception doing the polka with Mr. Mike or as I always called him Mr. Karkotsky. What a true legacy he leaves behind! I'll never forget him as long as I live, nor all his kindness! What a small world that my Mom was born in Illinois and my Dad's Mom was Sophia too! I've always had a special place on my heart for the Karkotsky family! It's not a wonder he raised such loving and caring children when you read his legacy here, or even better yet like me, lucky to have shared in a part of the Karkotsky family!

Love and Hugs, to all that knew and Loved the wonderful soul Mr. Mike Karkotsky!

  *Maureen Kovitch Jackson*

Maureen Kovitch Jackson - April 06, 2020 at 04:00 PM

TA

Maureen, thank you so much for your kind & caring words and for your beautiful memories of my Dad. I also remember him dancing the Polka with you and with so many of our wonderful friends and family members who helped to make Mike and I's wedding day so very special!

Terry Abeln - April 09, 2020 at 02:53 PM

RW

“ He was the most admired father an orphan could have hoped to have. I hope he is at peace now and with the Mother I should have stayed with. Yes there are regrets but I'll never regret the love Dad and Mom shared with me and my brothers. You'll be greatly missed Dad.

Raymond Williams - April 06, 2020 at 02:49 PM

TA

Raymond, your beautiful words have touched my heart! Dad and Mom both loved you very much and Dad was always so thrilled when you called him especially over these past three years! I am forever grateful for the joy you brought him and for making him feel that he was loved and would always be remembered! We are blessed to have you as a special member of our family!

Terry Abeln - April 09, 2020 at 03:02 PM