

IN MEMORY OF GERALD POCHYLA

Jerry Pochyla was a devoted husband, father, and grampy who always regarded his family as his greatest treasure. He was a kind, generous man with the softest hard nose that you'll ever meet. Jerry was the happiest when he was with his family, and in their warm company a familiar smile always brimmed over his lips.

With the crash of the Stock Market, the Great Depression spread throughout the country. The 1930's emerged as a decade of unemployment, labor movements, and widespread poverty. In this climate of hardship, Frank Pochyla and his wife Mary Hudziak maintained their optimistic spirits by focusing on the blessings in their life together. They were expecting a child, and on November 25, 1931 they were blessed with the healthy birth of their son Gerald.



Inez & Gerald Pochyla
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Jerry was born in Muskegon Heights. The younger of two children, he grew up with the company of his brother Robert. His father passed away when he was two years old, and he went to live with his grandparents in Shelby. Eight years later, his mother died, and soon after, Jerry spent the remainder of his youth with his aunt and uncle.



Jerry attended Shelby High School, graduating with the Class of 1950. He then attended Western Michigan University, but after his first semester he enlisted in the United States Navy where served as a radio operator on sea planes.

He was discharged in 1955, after four years of good service.

Jerry returned to Kalamazoo and soon found a maintenance job at the Upjohn Company. He caught the attention of one of his coworkers, a young woman named Inez Rowe. She liked his upbeat personality and sense of humor. One of her friends took on the role of matchmaker and said to Inez, "Would you like me to have him call you?" A few days later, Jerry and Inez went on their first date at the Anchor Inn at Gull Lake. This was the first chapter of a wonderful relationship that lasted over fifty years. Jerry and Inez soon fell in love, and on June 16, 1956 they were united in marriage.

Jerry and Inez were blessed with three wonderful children. Their son Frank was born in 1957, followed by Amy in 1959 and Becky in 1961. As his children remember, "Jerry was always there at the right time for the right things." He was a supportive, loving father who worked hard each day to provide for his beloved family. While raising his family, Jerry managed to find the time to return to Western Michigan University and earn his degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1963. In 1968 Jerry and Inez purchased a seasonal cottage on West Lake, which provided the setting for many of his favorite memories. He spent twenty years transforming this cottage into a permanent home. Jerry was a tremendous handyman, and he took great pride in his work.

Jerry enjoyed traveling, and he took his family on countless road trips through the Midwest and other parts of the country. He liked to drive, because in his mind, no one else knew how to drive properly. He always picked the best restaurants along the way, and could always find the spot in each town that served the best coffee and donuts. Jerry was an avid golfer too, and played as often as he could, wearing his trademark white golf shirt.

A devout Christian, Jerry followed the example of his Lord and Savior. He was a generous man who eagerly lent a helping hand. Throughout his life, he was always working on one project or another. When he wasn't working on his own house, he was helping his children with various projects at their homes. He was a charter member of St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church, where he played an integral role in their recent building project. The Church honored Jerry for his tireless help by naming a conference room in the newly remodeled church after him.

In his later years, Jerry was thrilled to see his family grow with the blessing of four grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Grampy, as he was called, would give his grandchildren anything that they wanted. He was generous and affectionate, and he enjoyed every moment that he spent with the youngest members of his family.

In 2005 Jerry was diagnosed with cancer. The cancer started as a lump in his neck and ultimately required surgery to remove one-third of his liver. Following the operation, Jerry and Inez went on a cruise through the Panama Canal. He returned to Michigan to discover that his cancer had spread throughout his body. Despite his prognosis, Jerry never complained. He only wished he hadn't lost his sense of taste. He took his illness in stride and made the best of hand that was dealt to him. The one thing he was the happiest about, was being able to meet his new great-grandson, Neal.

Among his family and many friends, Jerry will be greatly missed and frequently remembered. He was a unique man: generous and kind-hearted, with a sense of humor that filled many an evening with carefree laughter.

Jerry died on Saturday June 23, 2007 at his home. Learn more about Jerry, view his life story film, and visit with his family and friends Tuesday from 10 to 11 a.m. at St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church where Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11 a.m. following visitation. Besides his wife Inez, members of Jerry's family include his children Frank Pochyla, Amy Pochyla, Becky (Bob) Klose, four grandchildren, Angus (Cassie) Pochyla, Margaret Pochyla, Marah Klose, Elliott Klose, one great-grandchild, Neal Pochyla, a brother Robert (Veronica) Pochyla and cousins Elaine Galoit, Donna Galoit and Paula Poynter and many other cousins, nieces and nephews. Please visit Jerry's memory page at www.lifestorynet.com where you can archive a favorite memory or photograph, sign his guestbook online before coming to the funeral mass or make a memorial donation to St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church Building Fund. Arrangements by Life Story Funeral Homes, RDMG Portage, 5975 Lovers Lane.