



Robert W Gancarz

November 2, 1936 - January 3, 2020

Robert W. "Bob" Gancarz, age 83, longtime resident of the Fountain-Free Soil area and loving husband of Deanne (Mathews) Gancarz, died peacefully with family members present while in Hospice care at Spectrum Health Ludington Hospital on January 3, 2020. He had been experiencing significant health complications since late 2017.

Bob was born on November 2, 1936 to parents Walter and Kathryn (Savich) Gancarz in Detroit, Michigan. He attended the Free Soil elementary school during Kindergarten and half of first grade before his family moved to Muskegon, where he mostly went to Catholic schools through his junior year of high school. The family returned to Free Soil for his senior year and he graduated from Free Soil High School in 1955. Bob earned varsity letters as a student-athlete while playing football (in Muskegon), basketball, and baseball and became a lifelong sports fan -- especially Detroit Tigers baseball and Notre Dame football. Bob also greatly enjoyed deer hunting and steelhead fishing.

Immediately after high school, Bob volunteered for military service and was placed in the United States Navy. While in the Navy, he proudly served his flag and country aboard the destroyer tender U.S.S. Sierra (AD-18). Upon honorable discharge from the Navy, Bob attended Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) in Traverse City for a year and then worked for two years as a carpenter in Las Vegas, Nevada. Returning to complete his associate's degree at NMC, he met the love of his life, Deanne. They married on March 31, 1962.

Bob graduated from Central Michigan University with bachelor's and master's degrees and became a public-school educator, spending the bulk of his thirty-three-year career educating and inspiring young people as a social studies teacher at O.J. DeJonge Junior High in Ludington before retiring in 1997. Notably, on a classroom wall Bob displayed a poster quoting the early American education pioneer Horace Mann. The poster stated, "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity." He also created and taught the popular exploratory courses Great Moments in Sports and Field & Stream, which included class field trips to professional sporting events and an annual camping excursion

at the Ludington State Park.

While in retirement, Bob worked tirelessly to recognize military veterans for their service to our country. He spearheaded numerous projects in this pursuit, including the designation of U.S. 10-31 between Ludington and Scottville as Veterans Memorial Highway; designation of a stretch of M-55 between Manistee and Cadillac as Gold Star Mothers Memorial Highway; placement of memorial signage honoring Ludington's own Congressional Medal of Honor recipient William "Bill" Charette; construction and refurbishment of various memorial monuments in Ludington and Manistee; and facilitating numerous veterans events at area schools and other organizations. He was a very active member of seven veterans' organizations, including thirteen years of service as Commander of the Catholic War Veterans Steven T. Duchon Post 1847 in Manistee. Also, he was Michigan's 2010 Catholic War Veteran of the Year.

The family would like to recognize wife Deanne for the tremendous strength and unconditional love she exemplified as a caretaker of Bob throughout his extended illness.

Bob will be greatly missed by his devoted spouse, Deanne; daughter Jacqueline (Thomas) Ameluxen; daughter Kathryn (Kenneth) Cerabona; daughter Susan Niederkorn; son Gabriel (Michelle) Gancarz; grandchildren Patrick and Sydney Ameluxen; and grandchildren Elizabeth and Mark Cerabona.

Bob was preceded in death by his parents as well as younger sister Helen Gancarz and younger brother Jim Gancarz.

The Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated for Bob at 11:00 am on Tuesday, January 7 at St. John Cantius Catholic Church in Free Soil with Rev. Daniel DePew as Celebrant. Military Honors will immediately follow the service with burial to take place at St. John Cantius Cemetery. Friends may meet with his family for a time of visitation on Monday evening from 5:00-8:00 pm and on Tuesday morning from 10:00-11:00 am all at St. John's Church and the Rosary will be prayed for Bob Monday evening at 7:00 pm. Those who wish to remember Bob with a memorial donation are asked to consider contributing to the Catholic War Veterans Post 1847. Donations may be mailed to post Treasurer Mike Drake at 11127 Vitaz Rd, Brethren, MI 49619.

Cemetery

Events

St. John Cantius Cemetery **JAN**

Free Soil, MI, 49411

6

Visitation

05:00PM - 08:00PM

St. John Cantius Catholic Church

2845 East Michigan Street, Free Soil, MI, US, 49411

JAN

6

Rosary

07:00PM - 07:30PM

St. John Cantius Catholic Church

2845 East Michigan Street, Free Soil, MI, US, 49411

JAN

7

Visitation

10:00AM - 11:00AM

St. John Cantius Catholic Church

2845 East Michigan Street, Free Soil, MI, US, 49411

JAN

7

Funeral Mass

11:00AM - 12:00PM

St. John Cantius Catholic Church

2845 East Michigan Street, Free Soil, MI, US, 49411

Comments



“ A tribute video has been added.



Wyman Funeral & Cremation Services - January 06 at 02:42 PM



“ My old comrade ..RIP

jim quinlan - January 13 at 08:02 PM



“ Gancarz Family -

Like so many, I had the privilege of being taught by your husband and father at O.J. Junior High School many years ago. He was a good and kind teacher . Little did I know that our paths would cross several more times through the years : first - when Kathy started at Notre Dame as an undergrad and I was in law school and later , when I believe Mr. Gancarz found an larger passion with veteran causes and attended the weekly breakfasts with my father and his friends. Mr. Gancarz was so kind to my dad and his veteran friends - it something I will never forget . I am sure that Our Lady was with him in his final hours. May his soul rest in peace and may the perpetual light shine upon him.

With deepest sympathy and gratitude -

Teresa Ereon Giltner

Teresa Ereon Giltner - January 09 at 12:35 PM



“ Dear Deanne & Family,

Although I did not know Bob well personally, our paths crossed scores of times while we were both teaching. I had great respect for him and the demeanor he always demonstrated. He always showed me great respect as a single woman. In today's world, those words are a high compliment when spoken as a trait of that man's character! When I would see Bob, two words would cross my mind. When I saw the account tonight in the LDN of his passing those same two words immediately came to mind. Those two words are - "exemplary gentleman! I could not speak truer words than those about the Bob Gancarz I knew!

Please know my prayers are with you now and will be in the days ahead.

Warmly,
Ruth Babbitt

Ruth Babbitt - January 06 at 08:15 PM



“ 43 files added to the album LifeTributes



Wyman Funeral & Cremation Services - January 06 at 02:40 PM



“ Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Robert W Gancarz.



January 06 at 01:30 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Robert W Gancarz.



January 06 at 10:23 AM



“ Deanne and Family....our thoughts and prayers are with you during this difficult time. As part of our family events over the years, I enjoyed Bob's many stories about education, war stories and of course, Notre Dame football. As a fellow high school teacher, and one who is also committed to sharing countless stories and life experiences as part of the classroom, I know that he has touched the lives of many of his family, friends and students over the years. I also know that he will be

missed....but I believe his memory will live on in the lives of those of us who have been impacted by his life....

Bob Cerabona

Bob Cerabona - January 04 at 09:24 PM



“ Our deepest sympathies to the family on your loss. His passing will leave a giant hole in the whole community. He was a kind, compassionate, generous man. He was such a force for our veterans & always had a smile. We last saw him at Scotty's & talked for a bit. At his side, as always, was Deanne. He will be missed & his contributions to education, veterans, & the community will not be forgotten.
Terry & Scooter Hankwitz

margene Hankwitz - January 04 at 02:45 PM



“ Very Sad to hear of Bob's passing. I consider myself very fortunate to have called him a friend. A very patriotic and caring person. He will not be forgotten. My condolences to Deanne and the family. Rick Griffith

Richard Griffith - January 04 at 01:18 PM



“ Saddened to hear of Bob's passing...was a .friend from his days at MCC and we had a shared love for ND....he will be remembered in my prayers.....
Mary Liddle Tyler '



Mary Tyler - January 04 at 10:11 AM



“ With Distinction was purchased for the family of Robert W Gancarz.



January 04 at 09:56 AM



“ Mr. Gancarz was a true inspiration to me as a student in his classroom. My love of history was developed from being a part of his learning environment. He taught me what a true hero was and the importance of honoring those that serve our country. Because of him I chose to go into education and I now teach high school English and history. He accepted me for who I was and always saw potential in every student. My condolences go out to his entire family.

Erin Sharp - January 03 at 09:48 PM



“ To The Garcarz Family:
Your are in my prayers. Your husband and father was an inspiration to me like many students from OJ Deyoung Jr High. However, I do believe I was one of his favorites as I never had to hand write any of Longfellow's poem, "The Wreck of the Hesperus". He and I were both avid ND fans. I was in his class in the Tim Brown years so it was always fun. I later went on to teach English and History in his honor. He was a great man. I wish I could be there to celebrate his life with you... Jake OBrien
Go Irish!

Jake O'Brien - January 03 at 09:23 PM



“ Deanne, you and your family are in our thoughts and prayers! Bob sure was a Special American hero to us. He had you by his side for EVERY veteran ceremony in two counties. What a guy! Did so much for "our" veterans year after year! I will always remember my daughter and her family meeting you and Bob at the Breslin Center when she spotted Stephen T. Duchon Catholic War Veteran Post on Bob's jacket! Bob wore all those veteran hats proudly! Great educator and a Great man, and God Bless him and your family always! Go Irish!

Dan and Judy Duchon-Manistee

dan duchon - January 03 at 09:05 PM