



Walter William Schulz

October 4, 1947 - January 25, 2008

Walter “Butch” Schulz was a strong, caring man who enjoyed woodworking, “antiquing” and rodeos. Above all, though, he loved his family and friends. Underneath his great sense of humor and cheerful outlook on life was a reservoir of strength, which those around him came to depend on. Always thinking of others before himself, Butch was both blessed by and a blessing to those he loved. The year was 1947 and the world was slowly emerging from the darkness of World War II. Prosperity had replaced despair and people were beginning to enjoy themselves again. In Benton Harbor, Michigan, Frederick and Ruth (Zerbe) Schulz had something even more precious than wealth to celebrate. On October 4, 1947, the couple proudly welcomed the birth of their son, Walter William. He wasn’t “Walter” for long, though, because his Uncle Butch decided he “looked like a little Butch” and this nickname stuck with him his entire life. Along with his sister, Bonnie, Butch enjoyed a typical childhood growing up in Benton Harbor. Like many boys, he participated in Boy Scouts and began dabbling in woodworking, a pastime he enjoyed all his life. Butch spent many summers picking berries and fruit in the local vineyards, and then at 15, he got his first job as a bagger at a local grocery store. Butch received his education in the Benton Harbor Public Schools and graduated from BH High in 1966. Shortly thereafter, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy to serve his country during the Vietnam Conflict. Butch served in the Mediterranean Sea, and once stateside, he was stationed in California until his honorable discharge. Some time after settling into civilian life again, Butch married his best friend’s sister, Lynda Wiley, on June 6, 1970, in St. Joseph, Michigan. The couple spent the next 14 years together, raising their two children: Amy (1972) and Robert (1975), and sharing many wonderful moments as a family. During this time, Butch began his longtime career in the grocery business, managing Hilltop Grocery in St. Joseph, and later another store in Niles. Unfortunately, his marriage to Lynda ended in divorce in 1984, and a few years later, he moved to Nugent Lake in Baldwin in 1993. Here, Butch became a Grocery Merchandiser for Advantage Marketing, which sold Roundy’s food label. His job required him to travel to new accounts throughout the region and help set up their displays and stock. Advantage was later bought by Nash-Finch and they began selling the Our Family food label. Meanwhile, Butch’s life forever changed when he became a born again Christian in the Beacon Ministries Church in 1999. His strong faith became a hallmark of

his life. It was in the church's single group that Butch met Deborah (Hamm) Benfield, and romance soon blossomed between the two. They were married on October 6, 2001, at Beacon Ministries. Debbie brought more than just her love into Butch's life; she had a son from a previous marriage, and Butch happily welcomed Jay into their family. As a couple, Butch and Debbie were very active in their church, including in the help ministry and media department, but they were always looking for ways to help others in need too. Outside of church, the couple enjoyed several hobbies together, including antiquing and going to rodeos. Butch also served as Resident Agent of the Nugent Lake Hills Association, and was very instrumental in helping to clean up the lake for safe swimming, and made sure the roads around the lake were in good condition. At home, Butch kept busy with a few projects of his own, whether it was some woodworking, handy work, or helping with a project for someone else. For Butch, family was the greatest source of happiness in his life. Any time he shared with his loved ones was a day well spent! When his children were growing up, there were several family traditions they enjoyed taking part in every year. One of which was camping at Dune Lake during the summer with the Wiley family. With all the water fighting fun, it was amazing there was any water left in the lake. Another great get together they looked forward to every summer was the Zerbe family reunion. From being thrown in the pool, the water balloon fights and the constant rivalry between the Michigan and Michigan State fans in the family, the day was undoubtedly action packed and loads of fun. Many Thanksgivings were also shared with Butch's mother's side, and the mainstay after dinner was the football game. Funny thing though, Butch was a man of short stature, but he had some moves he taught his kids that was sure to take down them "big guys." In fact, Butch was ribbed quite a bit because he was "vertically challenged", especially since he married into a family where all the guys were over 6 foot. Butch's happiest moments always involved the time he spent with his children and grandchildren. His children have many fond memories of their trip to Washington, D.C. with just their dad, and the times they spent together at a rented cabin at Fremont Lake. Christmas was always Butch's favorite time of year when everything in and around the house was decorated with lots of lights, nothing was spared. Once blessed with grandchildren, Butch poured the same amount of love into these relationships as he did his own kids. No matter the distance, he never missed a chance to attend his grandkids school and sport activities; he was their #1 fan. When he wasn't watching their sporting events, Butch was cheering on Michigan football of which he was a die-hard fan. Butch was the kind of man who never thought twice about lending a hand to someone in need, yet he rarely asked for any help. For instance, this past summer he was putting a deck on his second story, and when his son arrived to help, he saw this "vertically challenged" man trying to hold up a 30 foot 4x4, which was comical and scary at the same time. But that was Butch, selfless and giving. He sought no praise or admiration for the ways in which he served others. Butch was there for anyone at any time, not because he had to be, but

because he wanted to share fully in the loves of the people he loved. His kindness, compassion and great humor will be remembered forever. Walter William "Butch" Schulz died suddenly at his home on Friday, January 25, 2008. He was preceded in death by his mother, Ruth. He will be greatly missed by his wife, Debbie; his children: Amy Schuring of Kalamazoo, Robert (Heather) Schulz of Mears, and Jay (Allison) Benfield of Stafford, VA; his beloved grandchildren: Garrett Schuring, Wade, Brooke and Reed Schulz, Alyssa, Zachary, Joshua and Matthew Benfield; his father, Frederick Schulz of St. Joseph; his sister, Bonnie (Jack) Miller of Benton Harbor; his father and mother-in-law, Rev. William and Deanna Hamm of Wyoming; his brothers-in-law: Donald (Melody) Hamm of Shipshewana, IN, Jeff Hamm of Grand Rapids, and Richard (Becky) Hamm of Niles; and many nieces and nephews.