



Calvin G. LaPorte

April 21, 1925 - May 20, 2016

Calvin George LaPorte, business leader and active community resident of Manitowish Waters, died peacefully on May 20, 2016 at Our Home K-Care in Lac du Flambeau, at the age of 91. He was born on April 21, 1925, in Rhinelander, WI, the son of George and Anna (nee Mattson) LaPorte. Mr. LaPorte is survived by his children Barbara (Mike) Bartling, David (Jane Sedivy) LaPorte; his step-children Patricia Stone, Fred (Terry) Theisen, Rich (DeEtte) Theisen, and Tom (Barb) Theisen; as well as 13 grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife Gladys Pukall; his wife Joyce Bartling Theisen; his siblings, Dorothy Bart and Jim LaPorte; and his nephews Ronnie and George Bart.

Cal's grandparents arrived in the Manitowish Waters area in 1889 from Wausau, Wisconsin. The LaPorte family quickly became business pioneers in the early development of the community, eventually establishing LaPorte's Grocery in 1937. The store became a local fixture in the area and the primary business for Cal, who invested 75 years of his working life there. Education began for Cal at the Spider Lake Grade School in Manitowish Waters and continued at Hurley High School from where he became a proud member of the graduating Class of 1943. Cal obtained his post high school degree from Coyne Electrical School in 1944 and then proceeded to work for LC Coleman in Chicago, IL, before returning home to work in the grocery business.

Cal's community support and involvement was extensive. For over 50 years, Cal was the caretaker of the Rest Lake dam in Manitowish Waters,

responsible for maintaining the water level of the chain of lakes. Less known to others was his service as the local weather station record keeper during this same period, once recording a temperature of 52 degrees below zero. Throughout his life, Cal invested much of his time with community organizations and local government positions. He served as the Manitowish Waters town clerk and was a member of the Manitowish Waters Fire Company and the Manitowish Waters Lions Club. Additionally, he was a member of the Shriner and Mason organizations. Cal also served on the Board of Directors of the Community Savings and Loan in Minocqua. Cal's "15 minutes of fame" can be connected to his 9th birthday party and the subsequent John Dillinger shoot-out at Little Bohemia Lodge. Historical records of the event indicate that on Saturday April 21, 1934, Cal's Aunt Nancy and cousin Emil Wanatka used the excuse of attending his birthday party to remove themselves from the danger of the anticipated FBI raid, which took place on April 22.

There will be a Celebration of Life on Saturday June 11th, at 1:00pm at the Manitowish Waters Community Church. It will be a time for all to share memories and favorite stories of "Big Cal".

Donations in Cal's memory can be made to Manitowish Waters Music in the Park, or the newly formed Manitowish Waters Historical Society.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUN 11. 1:00 PM (CT)

Manitowish Waters Community Church
49 S Hwy 51
Manitowish Waters, WI

Tribute Wall

JS

“ I just heard from Pat of Big Cal's passing. I know that he is in a better place where he is hunting, fishing, shooting his bow, raising the logs out of the dam at the end of summer, spending time with his wives and family remembering all of the good times that he had with others. Playing cards in the other room with the older relatives while we played in the family room. Skiing down the hills and cross country and then ready to take any woman out for a trip on the dance floor. Making the Fourth of July floats, shooting off the fireworks displays, doing the musky bake for years with him trading stories of the old days over the smoke of the charcoal and aluminum wrapped musky, dressing up for the parade as the band leader and us in his synchronized grocery cart.. and it goes on and on and on. I'll never forget the time that we were with Tom Coffman having drinks downtown and had too much but we walked to the house with no moon. We all laughed so hard and it took us over 20 minutes to get there and couldn't have been a more enjoyable walk. No man I have ever met had a bigger heart, a happier attitude, a natural and mechanical intelligence, street smarts and a true joy of life to come close to Cal. He was an extraordinary person and will be missed but never forgotten. Love to all of you. Jim Stone

Jim Stone - June 13, 2016 at 10:11 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Calvin G. LaPorte.



June 10, 2016 at 11:06 AM

MO

“ My memories of Cal are somewhat second hand but none the less vivid. I knew Cal through my parents Bob and Jeanne O'Neil. They were best of friends with Cal and Joyce; playing cards, volunteering in the community, book club and I think skiing. I doubt any of them ever passed up the chance to dance. To me Cal epitomized the friendliness and enthusiasm of Manitowish Waters. Always remembered peoples names, always had a hearty greeting and what a contagious laugh. His passing marks another step in the loss of his generation, the generation that made Manitowish Waters the community that it became.

Barb I send my condolences but not any sadness - he was a fine man and left a great legacy.

*Mike O'Neil
St. Louis, MO
Manitowish Waters, WI*

Mike O'Neil - June 05, 2016 at 10:18 AM

BB

Mike, thank you so much for your thoughts and expression of sympathy. Yes, that great and influential generation is coming to a close.

We held a Celebration of Life for Cal on Saturday, June 10th and it truly was a celebration. We shared many stories and laughs. It is very interesting that many of the same themes appear in people's comments. In his eulogy I talked about his playing cards, community involvement, laughter and of course his love of dancing. In fact, in the slide show we put together there was a picture of Cal dancing with your mother!

Cal loved his town of Manitowish Waters and was proud that he and his family are woven into its history.

Thank you for sharing your kind words and memories Mike.

Barbara LaPorte Bartling

Barbara LaPorte Bartling - June 13, 2016 at 08:42 AM

KM

“ I have many fond memories of Cal (and Joyce)... in the late '70s at the grille when my grandpa would take me for an ice cream sundae and a grilled cheese sandwich - in that order; in the late '80s and early 90's when I would cross-country ski with my grandma (Jeanne O'Neil) and go to the pot-lucks afterwards; seeing him at Little Bo's having his favorite meal... I will always remember his smile and hearty laugh. Cal = Manitowish Waters.

*Peace and love to all of the family,
Kelly Martinko (O'Neil)*

Kelly Martinko - June 05, 2016 at 09:14 AM

BB

*Thanks for sharing your memories Kelly. I forgot about those potlucks. They sure had fun and truly enjoyed each others company. So many great memories! We are so lucky to have had all of them in our lives and part of the Manitowish Waters community. So many people have commented that Cal was the face of MW for them. He took great joy in visiting with everyone that crossed his path, sharing a story, a joke and a good laugh or a piece of local history. Thank you for you caring thoughts.
Barbara LaPorte Bartling*

Barbara LaPorte Bartling - June 13, 2016 at 08:53 AM

JA

“ As an 80's teenager growing up in MW, Cal was a friendly face and always stopped me in the store to say hello and ask how my folks were doing. He was cordial and treated everyone with respect. The shopping center will forever be "Laporte's" to me. RIP Sir.

Joey Alonso - June 02, 2016 at 07:24 AM

BB

Hi Joey. Several of us were laughing the other day that so many people still call the grocery store LaPorte's....and Harry's is still Harry's, Anglers is still the Tower..... many great memories, including the Cozy Cove.

*Thank you for your kind thoughts and for sharing your memories.
Barbara LaPorte Bartling*

Barbara LaPorte Bartling - June 13, 2016 at 08:31 AM

PS

“ *Manitowish Waters has lost another icon, but the memory lives on.
Sincere sympathy to the family - Pat (Maletzke) Soderlund*

Patricia Soderlund - May 26, 2016 at 09:21 AM

BB

So nice to hear from you Pat and thank you for your thoughts. Cal was an icon in MW. He loved this town--its residents (year round or summer), his employees , and visitors. He was so proud that he and the LaPorte family are part of its history.

*Warm regards,
Barbara LaPorte Bartling*

Barbara LaPorte Bartling - June 13, 2016 at 08:20 AM

RM

“ *The profound influence Cal had on my family cannot be put into words. Having worked at LaPortes IGA through high school and college, I saw Cal in action everyday, rarely taking time off, seems he was the go to guy for many in the Manitowish Waters community. He will be greatly missed by many, my thoughts and prayers are with you Barbara and David, Cal was a good man, a mentor and friend for many years.*

*Sincerely,
Robert (Buzz) Maletzke*

Robert Maletzke - May 25, 2016 at 04:41 AM

BB

Hello Buzz. Thank you so much for your kind words and thoughts. We had Cal's Celebration of Life on Saturday, June 10th and it truly was a celebration of a good man who had a full life. Going through pictures confirmed that and brought up many names from the "way back machine", yours and your family's being one of them. So many memories!

Cal was a wonderful person. How lucky and blessed are we that he was a part of our lives!

So nice to hear from you Buzz.

Barbara LaPorte Bartling

Barbara LaPorte Bartling - June 13, 2016 at 08:12 AM

SP

“ He was a great man. He was a boss, pal, drinking and dancing buddy. I will always remember him. Sue Patterson

Sue Patterson - May 24, 2016 at 12:55 PM