



Eugene "Gene" P. Duerst

October 12, 1929 - August 3, 2019

Eugene "Gene" P. Duerst, 89, passed away on August 3, 2019 surrounded by his family. Gene was born in New Glarus, Wisconsin on October 12, 1929 to Palmer and Mavis (Figy) Duerst. Growing up he enjoyed a wide variety of sports and activities but his first love was always baseball. He played shortstop in high school and later in college. Upon graduation, Gene was invited to several major league training camps. Although he was never signed by either the New York Yankees or the Philadelphia Phillies this passion for baseball would influence his future career and his life.

Gene graduated from the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse in 1951 after receiving a 6 month draft deferment in order to complete his college education. He entered the US Army, completed his basic training, and was stationed in Japan for medical training. Gene served his country during the Korea War in the US Army's 8063rd Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, better known as MASH, located just north of the 38th parallel. He served with this unit for 18 months as an operating room technician and also with special services.

Upon Gene's discharge, in 1953, he returned to Wisconsin and accepted a physical education and coaching position with the k-12 Minocqua Islanders. (This school was located in the current town office building on the island of Minocqua.) While chaperoning a high school dance in the fall of 1954, Gene met Norma Johnson. Little did he know that this young woman would become the love of his life for the next 65 years – proving that love stories never end.

In 1966, Gene enrolled at UW-Madison obtaining his Master's Degree in Educational Administration. Together, Gene and Norma raised three children. For 38 years, Gene coached numerous teams, taught physical education and social studies, and served as principal at MHLT. During his tenure he touched the lives of thousands of children.

Gene lived a full and happy life staying active and involved until days before his passing. He started the Lakeland area wrestling program, summer little league baseball, and refereed countless sport events. He was honored to be a member of the Never Forgotten Honor Flight and visited Washington D.C. and the Korean War Memorial. Especially moving for Gene was the fact that both of his sons, Paul and Peter, served as guardians on his trip. He was an active member of the Minocqua Lions' Club, a charter member of Ascension Lutheran Church and served on the church council. He was a member of the Wisconsin and the National Education Associations and served as president of Lutheran Brotherhood's Northern Lights Branch. Gene was also an active member of the American Legion, Timber Ridge golf course, the Restless Weasels and his coffee group.

Gene was always proud of his Swiss heritage and could often be heard yodeling as he drove his boat through the channel to Lake Minocqua. He enjoyed the serenity of fishing whether it was in Canada with family members, on a trout lake, or pan fishing off his pontoon boat. As an accomplished artist, Gene found inspiration in the beauty of the pristine lakes and woods of Northern Wisconsin. He used his artistic talents to create paintings, cards, and wine glasses. He loved playing golf in Minocqua and in Gulf Shores, AL where Gene and Norma wintered for 25 years developing many life-long friends. Even at 89, he was still working on improving his game. They were fortunate to have golfed in 45 states in their 50 state quest, as well as golfing in four foreign countries; a highlight for Gene was playing the Old Course in Scotland.

Gene is survived by his wife Norma and their three children Kim (Dan) Widmer of Minocqua, Paul (Jackie) Duerst of Wausau, and Peter (Laurie)

Duerst of Waterford. Gene is also blessed to be survived by ten grandchildren: Whitney (Chris) Martinez, Danielle (Kelly) Kretz, Stephen (Cate) Duerst, Lauren (Jordan) Slagowski, Logan, Nikolai, Erica, Hannah, Jack and Nick Duerst and one great-grandchild, Clara Duerst. Gene loved watching his children and then his grandchildren participate in sports, becoming their biggest booster.

Gene was preceded in death by his parents, Palmer and Mavis Duerst. He is also survived by his sister, Carol (Dave) Hustad, and brother, Wayne Duerst. We are honored to celebrate the dash between the day he was born and the day he left us. What's not to admire about a man who not only loved and cared deeply for his own children and grandchildren, but every student he had the joy of working with?

Visitation will be from 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM on Thursday, August 8, 2019 at Ascension Lutheran Church in Minocqua. The funeral service will follow immediately after, at 11:30 AM.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made via check to the Eugene Duerst Lakeland Area Scholarship Fund, 8070 Brinkland Drive, Minocqua, WI 54548 in memory of Gene Duerst. Bolger Funeral and Cremation Services is assisting the family visit www.bolgerfuneral.com to share condolences.

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG 8. 9:00 AM - 11:30 AM (CT)

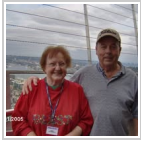
Ascension Lutheran Church
7937 Hwy 51 S
Minocqua, WI

Funeral Service

AUG 8. 11:30 AM (CT)

Ascension Lutheran Church
7937 Hwy 51 S
Minocqua, WI

Tribute Wall



“ *Our condolences to the family I always enjoy golfing with him .*

Tom and Robin

Tom Wipp - August 10, 2019 at 08:35 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Eugene "Gene" P. Duerst.*



August 08, 2019 at 05:19 PM



“ *I have spent many hours with Mr. Duerst in and out of school. He was a major influence in my life. He took the time to listen while teaching and was an amazing coach. Most of my time spent on a baseball field was with him in the dugout coaching or as an umpire. Prayers and Thanks to the Duerst family for sharing such a terrific man!*

Lance Krolczyk - August 08, 2019 at 01:20 PM



“ *Such a great man and great influence on so many lives! Mr. Duerst was one of my favorite teachers! In my own classroom I often think to myself, "What would Mr. Duerst do"! My condolences to the Duerst and Widmer families.*

Deb Hunter - August 08, 2019 at 11:31 AM

DJ

“ *Such a full life! God bless each of you with comfort and peace,
DJ Schult, NWD-LCMS*

DJ - August 08, 2019 at 09:45 AM

KK

“ *Sending prayers and hugs to the entire
Duerst family. I will never forget Mr. Duerst as
one of my favorite teachers. His soft spoken
ways and patience made students
comfortable to get extra help and support
when needed. God bless!*



Kelly Brunsch Karsky - August 07, 2019 at 10:23 PM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the
family of Eugene "Gene" P. Duerst.*



August 07, 2019 at 03:31 PM

JH

“ *I am so sad to hear of Mr. Duersts passing. He was one of my most
favorite teachers. He was kind and caring and always so patient.
The world would be a much better place if everyone was like Mr.
Duerst. God Bless the Duerst family at this saddest of times. Your
dad will always be remembered very fondly. Very Sincerely, Jackie
Handrick*

Jackie Handrick - August 07, 2019 at 01:04 PM

TF

“ Tom Rosandich and Family purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Eugene "Gene" P. Duerst.



Tom Rosandich and Family - August 07, 2019 at 12:36 PM

JC

“ What a great teacher and a great man. I appreciated his ability to get kids to think about the world. A terrible loss. All of my thoughts are with the Duerst family.

Jim Chiolino - August 06, 2019 at 03:57 PM

MK

“ Mr. Duerst was a great man and his family represents that. That is the best thing a man can have represent his life. To the family my thoughts and prayers to all at this time. May the memories and time help going forward.

God's blessings.

Mike Kratzer

mike kratzer - August 06, 2019 at 10:17 AM

MH

“ Not long ago at the American Legion steak fry, Mr. Duerst shared with me his story of the Korean war, they asked us "Who wants to be in a medical unit?" He said of course a bunch of us said certainly as this meant higher levels of safety vs. infantry. He met a young kid from Janesville, WI who was an aspiring baseball player - "That's all he talked about". A month into his MASH unit service, a guy came to his service tent and said, "Gene, a wounded soldier is asking to speak to you". Gene went over to the warrior's tent and it was the baseball player from Janesville. He said, "Gene, they are going to amputate my arm. Please stop them. I have to have my arm to play ball." Gene had teared up by now and I thanked him for sharing. I had no idea Mr. Duerst served in Korea. I did cheer his return from the Honor Flight a few years back. So glad he got to see the DC monuments with Peter and Paul at his side. I call everyone Mr. who I have great respect and admiration for. He always said, "Call me Gene." I've tried, but some people just command a different level of respect. RIP Mr. Duerst.

Mike Handrick - August 06, 2019 at 09:15 AM

DD

“ David & CarolHustad & family, Wayne Duerst purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Eugene "Gene" P. Duerst.

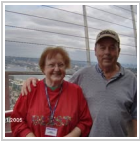


David & CarolHustad & family, Wayne Duerst - August 05, 2019 at 05:56 PM

JV

“ Gene was the best guy ever. We have such wonderful memories of him and Norma. Joe and I spent a lot of time with them in Gulf Shores, fishing, painting, eating out and having our fish fries. He will be missed in so many ways.
Joe and Carlene Venovich

Joe Venovich - August 05, 2019 at 03:36 PM



“ Our condolences to the family. What a nice person .

Tom Wipp - August 05, 2019 at 09:23 AM

RF

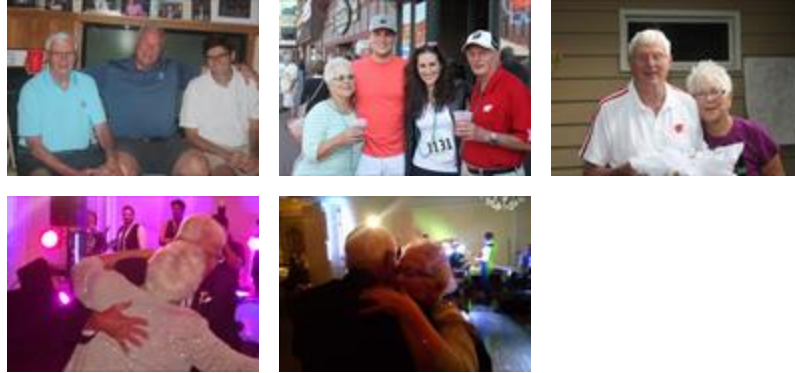
“ This man was the example that I wanted to follow for so much of my Life, I became a teacher and coach because of him, I always tried to give back to my community, like him, I never forgot his impact on my life! When they talk about a life well lived he is who came to mind always, he made Men out of boys and women out of young girls, he made us leaders and good citizens. Our legacy to him is that we have tried to do the same in the world and our communities. I will miss knowing that he is in this world, but still know his hand is on our shoulders. RIP Coach!

Richard French

Richard French - August 04, 2019 at 09:10 AM



“ Gene will be missed by everyone who has ever known him. He was such a wonderful man. He was also a gifted artist. I will treasure every piece of artwork I have of his. The neighborhood won't be the same without Geno. So many of my family's memories have Gene and Norma in them because of the "family connection". We loved you Gene.



Gail Yelton - August 04, 2019 at 07:18 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Eugene "Gene" P. Duerst.



August 03, 2019 at 05:18 PM



“ A great teacher, coach, mentor have always thought of him as a friend. Always reflected that sincere desire that you can exceed at anything in life you just have to try.....
Dick Crocker

Dick Crocker - August 03, 2019 at 04:30 PM

RF

Well said Dick, only good memories of him and our class.

Richard French - August 04, 2019 at 09:10 AM

S(

My thoughts and prayers go out to the entire family. Mr. Duerst was a wonderful teacher for PE and social studies.

Sue (Schlink)Clark - August 09, 2019 at 09:44 PM