



Rickie Hartsoe

November 9, 1941 - January 25, 2025

~In Memorium of Rick Hartsoe~

Rickie Hartsoe, age 83, of Flint (formerly of Royal Oak), passed away at his home on January 25, 2025.

-Background -

Rick Hartsoe was born and raised in Flint, Michigan by his parents, Ira and Myrtle Hartsoe, along with two sisters, Mary Ann and Ouida. He graduated from Flint Central High School. It was at Flint Central where he began finding his interest in music as a member of the orchestra, playing violin, and participating in the choir as Student Director. His teacher, Ed German, saw his potential and encouraged him to continue his music education after high school. Rick did so by following his sister, Ouida, to Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Majoring in organ performance, Rick enjoyed his studies at Moody. He participated in the Moody Chorale, met his future wife, Sylvia (also a musician), and pursued Choral Conducting. After Moody, Rick returned to Flint where he married and completed his Bachelor of Arts in Music Education from Oakland University (then associated with Michigan State University). Mr. Hartsoe then began teaching first in Junior High in Pontiac, MI, where he had done his student teaching under Gil Jackson. He was also involved in conducting church choirs. Rick's dad was a Baptist minister and Rick was

raised in the General Baptist Church. It was through this connection that he learned that Dondero High School in Royal Oak was looking to hire a choir director. Being interested, he submitted his application and thus met with the School Principal, Bruce G. Feigner. Mr. Feigner was himself the former choir director at the school.

-A Career in the Making-

Mr. Hartsoe joined the Royal Oak School System music department at a time when many other music directors had been teaching for a while. Mr. MacGregor, the vocal music director, taught Girl Glee class, Girl's Choir, and Music Theory. Mr. Hartsoe replaced a retiring teacher, Dale Smith, and was assigned Girls Glee, Capella Choir, Male Chorus, and Music Appreciation.

These concerts were traditional in nature and performed sacred music, folksong and spirituals, patriotic songs, showtunes, and sometimes those more whimsical in nature. The concerts also included large works such as Vivaldi Gloria and Schubert's Mass in G, with orchestra.

-Things Begin to POP-

It was during his interview with Mr. Feigner that he was asked about his ideas on Pop Music. Mr. Hartsoe indicated that Pop music may have its place and would take it under consideration. Under consideration he did, thus during the fall of his inaugural year he taught the first Pop Concert. It was held in November 1967, after school in the Dondero Auditorium. There was piano accompaniment only, a couple of student solos, and a few songs performed by the choir and produced by the usual school music publishers. Attendance was light, but word of mouth insured that attendance at the next Pop Concert would improve.

Improve it did, and grow and grow. One year later, musical instruments such as horns, drums, and guitars were added. Through the years, keyboards and songs requiring special instrumentation like violin and flute were procured from other Dondero students. Musicians began to compete for the opportunity to play their instruments for the Pop Concert.

The popularity of the Pop Concert grew to such demand that the concert was moved to the weekends with multiple afternoon and night performances.

Pop Concert began to take on a life of its own. As Google and YouTube grew, so did access to the Dondero Pop Concerts. It took on a life of its own. It ended when Mr. Hartsoe retired in 2006 and Dondero closed.

-Adventures-

In the late 70s, the Hartsoe family purchased an RV and began traveling during Rick's summer off. The most memorable trip for Rick was the family's climb of Half Dome. He talked about that experience more than any other.

After his retirement, we began our travel log of new places to explore. We managed to get from Vancouver to Prince Edward Island, stopping on the way back to get married at Niagara Falls, USA. We managed to squeeze into the Florida Keys and all the way across to California for the Rose Bowl Parade .

We managed to find many excellent adventures such as river boat cruises, excursion trains, and old town squares to explore, finding a few soda fountains along our way. Waterfalls and courthouses were a few more places that piqued our interest, especially those used in old movies such as ANATOMY OF A MURDER (filmed in the U.P. of Michigan) and TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD (filmed in Montgomery, AL). Traveling through the south, we

just had to tour the museum of costumes from Gone with the Wind and see the house used as the inspiration for the O'Hara Plantation.

There's so much more to tell, but as Rick grew older, he eventually had to give up the keys to the RV. He was 82 years old. I have left out a million things. Let's just say, he had joy, he had fun, and he had seasons in the sun.

Along with a successful career and life that he can be most proud. He was loved and admired and he changed lives for the better for hundreds of Dondero students. His family and my family loved him. And I will always love him.

~ Lovingly submitted by Donna~

Rick will be remembered as the beloved husband of Donna Vandermark. Loving father of Carla Likich of Michigan, Brad (Anna Szkudlarek) Hartsoe of Gloucester, UK; and step-father of Carole (Michael) Keller of Bourbonnais, Illinois. Proud grandfather of Ethan and Julia Hartsoe; and step-grandfather of Olivia Bray, Owen Bray, Lilly Keller, and Conner Keller. Dear brother of Mary Ann (Keith) Hayward and Quida Wandalyn.

Visitation for Rick will be held on Friday, February 7, from 4 - 8 p.m. at Wm. Sullivan & Son Funeral Home, 705 W. Eleven Mile Rd. (four blocks east of Woodward), Royal Oak. Additional visitation will be held on Saturday, February 8, from 10:30 a.m. until the time of the funeral service, 11:30 a.m., at the funeral home. A graveside committal service will follow at Oakview Cemetery.

Cemetery Details

Oakview Cemetery

1032 N. Main Street
(south of 12 Mile Road)
Royal Oak, MI 48067

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 7. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Wm. Sullivan and Son Funeral Directors-Royal Oak
705 W. Eleven Mile Road
Royal Oak, MI 48067
(248) 541-7000
royal@sullivanfh.com
<https://www.sullivanfuneraldirectors.com/>

Visitation

FEB 8. 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM (ET)

Wm. Sullivan and Son Funeral Directors-Royal Oak
705 W. Eleven Mile Road
Royal Oak, MI 48067
(248) 541-7000
royal@sullivanfh.com
<https://www.sullivanfuneraldirectors.com/>

Funeral Service

FEB 8. 11:30 AM (ET)

Wm. Sullivan and Son Funeral Directors-Royal Oak
705 W. Eleven Mile Road
Royal Oak, MI 48067
(248) 541-7000
royal@sullivanfh.com
<https://www.sullivanfuneraldirectors.com/>

Burial

FEB 8. 1:00 PM (ET)

Oakview Cemetery
1032 N. Main Street
Royal Oak, MI 48067

Tribute Wall



“ *Mindy Schwartz planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Rickie Hartsoe.*

Mindy Schwartz - February 06, 2025 at 07:56 PM



“ *Mindy Schwartz purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Rickie Hartsoe.*



Mindy Schwartz - February 06, 2025 at 07:56 PM



“ *Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Rickie Hartsoe.*



February 06, 2025 at 03:47 PM



“ *Gracious Lavender Basket was purchased for the family of Rickie Hartsoe.*



February 05, 2025 at 04:13 PM

GS

“ I will forever remember Mr. Rick Hartsoe as the person who challenged me and taught me the beauty of the voice! He took pity on me and allowed me to sing in Acapella Choir my last two years. Being a percussion instrumentalist, I learned a lot and also enjoyed playing in the Pop Concerts 71 and 72. One favorite memory is when we were going to play Cherish by the Association. He called me into his office and gave me a copy of the score. He also asked me if I owned the record. He asked if I could write the Chime Part and Bell Part, which I did. He always called me “The Chime Guy” after that. Even much later at RODHS Alumni Closing Concerts (Band and Choral). I enjoyed playing some Drum Set and other percussion instruments through Pop Concerts and CHristmas Concerts. Singing The Messiah was a favorite. Speaking of singing - Rick always had me stand next to David Shock, who he said was “a good” baritone. Listen to him!! I will miss our many conversations and FB exchanges through the years. We shared music! My Sympathies to Donna, Carla and Brad, and extended Family!

Grant G. Skomski - February 05, 2025 at 02:27 PM

JZ

“ Mr. Hartsoe was my choir teacher at Dondero High School. Choir was so much fun and I'll never forgot the big concerts that everyone participated in - thanks to Mr. Hartsoe's tremendous talent. Thank you for being a good teacher 🙏

Jill Zamojcin - February 02, 2025 at 05:18 PM

BF

“ My sister, Crystal Forbush, was a huge fan or Mr.Hartsoe and certainly enjoyed his teaching and friendship. He impacted hers, and many many lives at Dondero and will be sorely missed. Prayers for his family.

Bill Forbush - February 02, 2025 at 01:02 PM

PP

“ As longtime friends and neighbors living on Hoffman, we first met Rick and his then wife, when a large tree fell on our house; the Hartsoe’s took us in and let us stay with them for 5 days. He was well liked by everyone. Condolences to his family.

Patricia Polikowsky

Pat Polikowsky - February 01, 2025 at 10:35 AM

CS

“ I knew him from Dondero High School, I was never in choir didn't have interest in it. He also went to see band out in about where my daughter and I would run into him plus in August he showed up at the Dondero picnic In the park in Royal oak . He was such a nice guy my daughter and I really liked him we are sorry to see of his passing. We send are condolence to each and every one that knew of him and his family also love Caroline and Rachel ❤️

Caroline Smith - January 30, 2025 at 05:09 PM

JS

“ I was a fellow teacher at Dondero and will always remember Rick as "Mr. Pop Concert". He was a great teacher who brought out the best in his students.

Condolences and prayers to Donna and families.

Judy Sweet - January 29, 2025 at 08:00 AM

GL

“ I came to Dondero in 1998 as principal. Rick Hartsoe introduced himself to me and explained the music program at DHS and the annual PopConcert! I pictured a usual kind of concert held at most high schools! When I experienced my first pop concert I couldn't believe my eyes and ears! I now knew one of the major events that made this school so special! Mr. Hartsoe and his music was a major cornerstone of that amazing school!

Gerald LeCureux - January 28, 2025 at 06:02 PM

DA

Thank you so much for your most kind words.
Donna Vandermark

DAISEADAY - January 29, 2025 at 05:36 AM

RG

Mr. Hartsoe helped me and many others grow as musicians and people. He will be greatly missed.

Roy Garbuz - January 29, 2025 at 09:32 PM

EC

My condolences. My children learned lessons that will stay within always along with the love of music. Thank you, Mr. Hartsoe.

Elizabeth Hakli CKD - January 30, 2025 at 09:46 AM

AM

I was a member of mixed Choir (class of 87) I have many good memories and just as many bad ones but I did learn about music from Mr Hartsoe , I will always remember bop bop bop .rip Rick

Andrea McLearen - January 30, 2025 at 05:00 PM

FS

Mike Magee and I provided sound reinforcement for a pop concert at Dondero in the early seventies, before he and I graduated in 1972. Mr Hartsoe, as recently as last year, still talked about that concert and how we helped make the sound in the auditorium fabulous for the audience! He was a very special man with talent and great vision. It was an honor to work with him and to learn from him! R.I.P., Rick Hartsoe...

Floyd Soo - February 02, 2025 at 03:56 PM