



Walter H. Gruber

May 15, 1928 - October 19, 2022

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Wally Gruber's legs gave out long before his heart and lungs did, but he ran the best of races in the 94 years he was allotted.

Born on May 15, 1928, in Cincinnati to Walter and Lillian Gruber, he outlived all his siblings-his older brother Elmer, his "Sis" Mariel, and his younger twin brother Will. Wally arrived in Detroit on a football scholarship to the University of Detroit in the fall of 1946. In spring of 1948 his prowess on the cinders earned him an invitation to the Olympic Trials in Track and Field prior to the London Summer Games, only to come up lame before the final heat. By the fall, though, he had recovered well enough on the gridiron to return a kickoff 97 yards for a touchdown-the longest such scoring feat in the nation that collegiate year as the Titans nearly led the nation in rushing offense. Wally was twice voted Athlete of the Year by the student body.

On campus Wally met the love of his life, Marilyn Dwyer, and he chased her steadily until she let herself be caught. They married in 1950, and her death in 2015 occurred just shy of their 65th anniversary. His degree in mathematics led to a long career as an aerospace engineer at Bendix Corp., designing elements of guidance and navigation systems for some of the missiles that eventually powered the Mercury and Apollo astronomical and lunar missions

(adapting some of those technologies for use in the more cramped confines of six-foot coal seams). Some of his work remains officially classified. After retiring from Bendix he embarked on a second, almost equally lengthy career as a professor of mathematics, first at Mercy College of Detroit, and then after its merger with his alma mater, at the University of Detroit Mercy.

Surviving Wally are his children Michael (Katherine), Mary Jo (Bruce Cicone), and Janet Ventimiglia (William); granddaughters Emily Keck (Sean), Caitlin Cicone, Anna Cicone (Nick Zerman), Sarah Grauzer (Andrew), and twins Danielle and Carly Ventimiglia; one great-granddaughter Alessia Zerman Cicone; and a host of nieces and nephews spread out over the United States from Ohio to Florida, North Carolina to Minnesota.

Boaters for 20-odd years, Wally and Marilyn headed for distant ports on their 26-foot Chapparral christened Innisfree, cruising the Cheneaux Islands, Michigan's Inland Waterway and Chain of Lakes, setting out from their slip on Lake Charlevoix. Beaver Island was always a favorite destination, as was historic FishTown in Leland, but so were little coves where they'd drop anchor for their granddaughters to swim off the aft platform. In the winters Wally skied downhill until he was 80, sometimes in Colorado, but more often at Schuss Mountain or the Boyne resorts located closer to the Mancelona cabin he wired himself and finished off with the help of Marilyn and his family. He passed on his love of winter sport to all his children and their children.

Avid in his pursuit of racial, social, and economic justice, Wally advocated tirelessly for Civil Rights, against the war in Vietnam, for nuclear disarmament, and for the Equal Rights Amendment. He has left behind voluminous binders of his correspondence with Detroit City Council members and mayors, Michigan and United States representatives and senators, as well as numerous bishops, archbishops, and cardinals across the decades. He canvassed for Eugene McCarthy in early 1968 and he never missed voting in

an election after the Eisenhower-Stevenson contests.

After the University of Detroit dropped football, he transferred his autumn allegiance to South Bend and wore his Notre Dame apparel religiously on game days. Chosen as best man at his son's wedding, Wally was truly the best of men and ran such a good race as God's faithful servant that there was no need for any photo finish at the end.

In lieu of flowers donations can be sent to Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish whose Our Lady of Fatima church Wally helped fundraise for back in the late 1950s; Forgotten Harvest; and Focus: HOPE, two organizations foundationally committed to practical solutions to poverty and hunger in metropolitan Detroit.

A memorial service for Wally will be held on Saturday, December 10, at Our Lady of Fatima Church in Oak Park (Coolidge between 9 Mile and 10 Mile) with a Mass of the Resurrection at 11:00 a.m., preceded by a gathering in the antechamber.

Previous Events

Mass of the Resurrection

DEC **10**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Our Mother of Perpetual Help ~ Oak Park
13500 Oak Park Boulevard
Oak Park, MI 48237

Tribute Wall

DI

“ *Mr. Gruber sounds like a wonderful man, what a legacy! My condolences to his family and friends*

Diana - November 03, 2022 at 04:59 PM

WG

“ *My sincerest condolences. A wonderful giving, gentle man. Many good memories. Will Gervais*

Will Gervais - October 27, 2022 at 02:58 PM

MC

“ *Dear Jan I remember the Super Bowl parties with Wally and your wonderful family i especially remember the wonderful time Wally and you had at the Detroit Golf Club during the first Rocket Mortgage Classic he was truly a tender and loving man and I am so glad that he was able to make Sarah's and Andy's wedding .He had such a great sense of humor and he loved his Martini's i feel blessed to have been able to spend some quality time with him God Bless you and all the members of your family love mike callaway*

mike callaway - October 23, 2022 at 10:58 PM