



William Duncan MacPhee

April 6, 1925 - March 10, 2019

William Duncan MacPhee of Royal Oak passed away on March 10, 2019 at the age of 93. He was born on April 6, 1925 in Detroit, Michigan to Duncan and Harriett (MacPherson) MacPhee. 'Bill' attended Angel Elementary, McMichael Middle School and Northwestern High School, all in Detroit.

On October 27, 1943, Bill enlisted in the US Navy. A proud veteran of World War II, he served as a radioman with the 7th Fleet Flag in the SW Pacific Theatre (Philippine Islands and China), and with Mobil Communication Unit #7 and USS PC 593.

After the war Bill enrolled at Wayne State, where he earned several degrees. He was a member of Alpha Sigma Phi and Phi Beta Kappa. While there he met Ruth Elizabeth Murphy, and they were married April 4, 1953. The couple made their home in Royal Oak. Bill taught in the Highland Park Public Schools for several years, and in 1959 became a Counselor at Royal Oak Kimball High School. The couple were active members of the First Baptist Church of Royal Oak (now Genesis the Church), participating in choirs, committees, and numerous volunteer programs.

A man of many talents, Bill was also a Red Cross Swimming and Life Saving Instructor and taught at the Highland Park, Royal Oak, and Ferndale Recreation Departments.

Bill and Ruth enjoyed several summers as Counselors at Camp Hiawatha in Comins, MI (Bill was also Waterfront Director) and Camp Nikana in the UP. Surrounded by the beauty of Northern Michigan, the two decided to look at property with the idea of building a cottage. They settled on a lake near Cheboygan. The cottage became a lifelong project and hub of activity for the MacPhees where they spent numerous weekends and summers and enjoyed hosting friends and relatives. Bill had an abiding interest in and knowledge of Michigan's flora and fauna, and it was at the lake house that he taught his children and grandchildren a love and respect for the environment.

A sports enthusiast, Bill followed the professional Detroit sports teams, particularly the Red Wings and Tigers. He coached for the Royal Oak Hockey League and taught his children to skate at an early age. Every winter he flooded the backyard to make an ice rink. After school and on weekends a stream of neighborhood kids would visit the MacPhee home to skate and play pickup hockey. Similar to the cottage, the ice rink grew over the years. By the time his children were teenagers, the rink sported makeshift goal nets, boards, a blue line and face-off circle.

In 1986, Bill retired from Kimball after 27 years of service. He spent many well-deserved hours on the golf course, enjoyed fishing and sailing, and also delved into the culinary arts (3-alarm chili was a specialty). Bill and Ruth were devoted grandparents, traveled often and each winter escaped to Florida for a few weeks.

Music was more than a hobby for Bill. While a teen he developed a lifelong love for the Big Band Sound. He followed the careers of Duke Ellington, Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, Count Basie and more, collecting news articles and autographs over the years. He played drums for several metro-area bands and was a lifetime member of the American Federation of

Musicians, local 784. His most recent musical endeavor was as a member of The Hotel Savarine Society Orchestra - organized to 'recreate the sweet and syncopated song stylings of a hotel dance band of the late 1920s and early 1930s.' He played his last gig (at 85) at Greenfield Village, in Dearborn, Michigan for the Antique Car Festival.

Bill is preceded in death by his parents and brother, Douglas. He is survived by beloved wife of 66 years Ruth (Murphy), loving children James (Kristin) and Susan (Marc) and cherished grandchildren Gwendolyn, Genevieve, Dominick (Gray) and Natalie (Gray).

The family will receive friends on Saturday, March 23rd, from 2:30 p.m. until the time of the Memorial Service at 3:30 p.m. at Genesis the Church, 309 North Main Street, Royal Oak, MI 48067.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to the following: Doctors Without Borders, www.doctorswithoutborders.org; Genesis the Church, Phone: 248-542-2266, www.genesisthechurch.org; and Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, 426 Bay Street, Petoskey, MI 49770, Phone: 231-347-1181, www.watershedcouncil.org. Arrangements by Wm. Sullivan and Son Funeral Home, Royal Oak, www.SullivanFuneralDirectors.com.

Cemetery Details

Great Lakes National Cemetery

4200 Belford Road
Holly Township, MI 48442

Previous Events

Memorial Visitation

MAR 23. 2:30 PM - 3:30 PM (ET)

Genesis The Church
309 N. Main Street
Royal Oak, MI 48067

Memorial Service

MAR 23. 3:30 PM (ET)

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