

Richard A. Knechtges, 67, of Manistee passed away unexpectedly Thursday morning, March 14<sup>th</sup> 2013 at West Shore Medical Center.

He was born April 8, 1945 in Buffalo, NY to Richard G. and Bernice (Loberger) Knechtges. Richard lived in Buffalo and Wisconsin until 1948, when his family moved to Manistee, where his father accepted a position as General Superintendent of American Box Board Co. in Filer City. Richard attended Guardian Angels School. While there he played softball and basketball and was a Cub Scout. In October 1954 he contracted Polio and was transported to Grand Rapids for treatment and rehabilitation. He attended Jefferson Elementary School in 1955, and participated in Cadet Band, playing Cornet.

Richard graduated Manistee High School in 1963. While there he participated in Rifle Team, Explorer Scouts, Future Teachers of Manistee and Manistee High School Band. Also, from 1958 to graduation, he had several surgeries and was in & out of the hospital in Grand Rapids several times, but attended the hospital school there.

He attended Central Michigan University in 1964, graduating in 1968 with a BS in Education degree. While in college he participated in Men's Union, Debate Team, Dorm Quad Food Commons Council, Chippewa Big Brother/Sister Program, Newman Association, Pi Kappa Delta (Speech honorary) and Student Senator.

After graduation, he worked in private industry, then as a substitute teacher, while living in Grand Rapids. He was a member of the Catholic Alumni Club and National Association of the Physically Handicapped in Grand Rapids. In 1972 he was hired by the Michigan Department of State Highways and Transportation (now MDOT) in Cadillac. While there, he was a Boy Scout leader, member of Cadillac Jaycees and Cadillac Community Band. In 1975 he was promoted to MDOT in Lansing, in 1979 to the Energy Administration and in 1991 to the Michigan Public Service Commission, from where he took the Early Retirement in 2002. While in Lansing, he married, and was a father to 2 children. He participated in several organizations in Lansing: National Association of the Physically Handicapped, White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals, Mayor's Handicapper Advisory Committee, Local Advisory Committee (Chair) to Capital Area Transportation Authority's Board of Directors, Holt Jaycees and Boy Scouts (District Committee).

Richard moved back to Manistee in 2006 and was very active in programs for persons with disabilities, such as "Envision ACCESSIBLE Manistee", "Explore the Shores" (universal access fishing piers), National Association of the Physically Handicapped (Manistee County Chapter, formed in 2008) and Regional Interagency Consumers Committee (RICC). He also played Cornet in the Manistee Community Band. He was a member of the City of Manistee Non-Motorized Transportation Committee, Local Advisory Committee (Chair) to the Manistee County Transportation Inc. Board of Directors, Building Ties, St. Mary Men's Club, Knights of Columbus, and the St. Joseph Civic Club. He was a member of St. Mary of Mt. Carmel Shrine Parish of the Catholic Community of Manistee.

Richard is survived by his wife Katherine (Neilsen) Knechtges, 2 children, Patrick and Laura Knechtges of Lansing; his sister and brother-in-law, Patti & Michael Morris of Onokama; a niece, Katie (Morris) Anderson, his aunt and uncle, James & Mary Ann Jeanquart and by several cousins.

Mass from the Order of Christian Burials will be celebrated Monday morning, March 18<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m. at St. Mary of Mount Carmel Shrine with Rev. Father John McCracken, celebrant. Burial will be in Mount Carmel Cemetery. Family and friend will pray the vigil prayers Sunday evening at 8:00 p.m. at the funeral home

The family will be at the Johnson Funeral Home to receive friends on Sunday afternoon from 2:00 to 4:00 and 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

The family has requested that those wanting to remember Richard consider a gift in his memory for Bay Cliff Health Camp (P.O. Box 310, Big Bay, MI 49808)

Richard's life is a story of great hope for all people. Despite several major disabilities, he had a successful career and was a wonderful husband and father.

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to the Johnson Funeral Home of Manistee.  
[\[www.johnson-funeral-home.com\]](http://www.johnson-funeral-home.com)