



Ervin Alexander Kowalski Sr., age 91 of Manistee, passed away peacefully at his home, on Respect Life Sunday, October 1, 2017, to be in the loving arms of God, surrounded by his loving wife, Ilene and family.

Erv was born in Manistee, Michigan on August 21, 1926, the son of Felix & Mary (Buchalski) Kowalski.

He was a graduate of Manistee High School Class of 1944.

Erv proudly served his country in the U.S. Army during World War II, from 1944 to 1946. He participated in campaigns in France, Belgium and Germany and witnessed the atomic bomb testing with an observer group. Erv was one of the few remaining from the "Greatest Generation". He was honorably discharged from the military on October 26, 1946.

Erv worked hard throughout his entire life, - his first job, while still attending high school, was at Snyder Shoes in Manistee, followed by F.N. Williams and then the American Box Board Company. He began his own business, Kowalski Distributing, in 1948 when he was just 22 years old, distributing soft drinks, and later, beer and wine. He introduced champagne to Manistee. He sold this portion of the business in 1984 and started a long distance trucking/brokerage company. He retired just shy of seven months ago, on March 10, 2017, having had the reputation of being one of Manistee's most astute businessmen.

Erv was a remarkable husband, father and grandfather and his family enjoyed him tremendously. He is dearly loved and will be greatly missed. He lived a great life – impacting people's lives throughout the country. He would do anything for anyone.

Erv married Mary Ilene Aultman on April 18, 1953 and is survived by her as well as their six children – Mary (Gerry) Haw, Rochelle Thomas, Ervin (Donna) Kowalski Jr., Bonita (Harry) Bigalke, Bernadette (John) Duhoski, Lori Kowalski (Mike Hanna); and eight grandchildren, Gary Wilhelm, Lindsey (Jon) Hanichen, Danielle Kowalski, Jared Hilliard, Kendra (Thomas Elmer) Hilliard, Nicole (Ben) Pavlovic, and Nicholas & Nathan Duhoski; and two great grandchildren Mia & Carter Hanichen. Erv always enjoyed spending time with his family, as well as traveling with his wife, Ilene, of 64 years.

He is also survived by his sisters-in-law, Rita Skipski, Margaret Sullivan and Carol Aultman.

Erv always supported his local community of Manistee where he was born and raised, and has been a lifelong philanthropist.

Erv was a former Manistee County Commissioner, serving district #4 for 18 years and was on the Manistee County Library Board, Airport Authority, Ways and Means and Financial Committees. He also served as a liaison for the Manistee County Medical Care Facility.

Erv was a communicant of Divine Mercy Parish where he served as lector and Eucharistic minister. He was also a spiritual mentor for area youth through the Faith Filled Friends Program. He served on the Diocesan Catholic Services Appeal Board and also served as Diocesan Lay Chairman and volunteered for prison ministry at the Oaks Correctional Facility in Manistee. Erv also supported Catholic Vocations and Right to Life.

Erv was an active member of many service groups, including the American Legion Post #10 where he was the longest standing member; and life member of the V.F.W. Walsh Post #4499. He also belonged to several civic groups including the B.P.O. Elks Lodge #250 and was a life member of the Eagles Aerie #1765 and the Manistee Moose Lodge #1128. He was a founding and charter member

of the Catholic War Veterans #1847, and served as their treasurer for many years. He assisted veterans and supported their programs whenever possible. He was a member of the United Veterans Council, serving as their secretary/treasurer for more than 30 years, and had been the coordinator of the Memorial Day Program in Manistee County for many years.

He was a member for more than 60 years of the Knights of Columbus Monsignor J.M. Steffes Council #853 where he achieved the rank of 4<sup>th</sup> Degree, and served in many capacities, including but not limited to Former Master (2 terms in the Gaylord Diocese), former District Deputy, past Grand Knight, past Faithful Navigator and Recording Secretary. He served the community and visited weekly for Saturday rosary with the residents at the Manistee County Medical Care Facility for many years. He was previously chosen as Citizen of the Year.

Erv was a founding father of Manistee Catholic Central Schools and has been inducted into their Hall of Fame. He served as president of the MCC Schools Foundation for 18 years and was a former board member. He was a former member of the MCC Band Boosters, a supporter of the MCC Washington Group, and a strong supporter of Catholic education.

He was also a board member and Vice President of the West Shore Medical Center Foundation and strongly believed in good quality medical care for Manistee County.

He was selected as an honoree at the first Annual Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame. He was a member of the Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association, the Manistee Industrial Development Corporation and the Manistee Economic Council and Chamber Alliance. He also served on the Board of Directors of the West Michigan National Bank of Manistee until 1996.

Erv, working with Senator Carl Levin, was instrumental in helping Manistee to keep the local United States Coast Guard Station open.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his mother and father-in-law, Mary & Hubert Aultman; his sister and brother-in-law, Clara and Harry Strzyzewski; his brother and sister-in-law, Arthur and Matilda (Aultman) Kowalski, his brother, Leonard Kowalski, and his brothers-in-law, Charles Aultman, Robert Skipski and Victor Sullivan, and his son-in-law, Gary E. Wilhelm, Sr.

The family will be at the Herbert Funeral Home to receive friends on Wednesday, October 4, 2017 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. with rosary to follow at 7:00 p.m. led by the Knights of Columbus.

The family will be at Guardian Angels Catholic Church in Manistee to receive friends on Thursday, October 5, 2017 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Mass of Christian Burial will then be celebrated at 11:00 a.m. with Fr. Zeljko Guberovic celebrant.

Interment will follow at Mount Carmel Cemetery also in Manistee where members of the Manistee County United Veterans Council will present military graveside honors.

Memorial contributions may be made in Erv's name to Manistee Chapter – ARC, Catholic War Veterans, Stephen T. Duchon Post, Knights of Columbus of Manistee or to the organization of the donor's choice.

Envelopes will be available at the funeral home and also at the church on Thursday morning.

Special thanks to those from Friends Who Care, Comfort Keepers and Hospice, who along with Erv's devoted family helped to fulfill his final wishes.

**The Herbert Funeral Home of Manistee is in charge of funeral arrangements.**