



A Man with a passion for the Seasons

It was gloomy, dark, and rainy on the morning of August 17, 2024, in Manistee County, MI. But in one location, directly above the home of Mason C. Stapley, a big blue hole in the sky was sculpted away from the dense storm clouds around. The sun stayed shining on the house through the hole as Mason left the Earth peacefully on that very morning. After a three and a half year daunting and hard battle with brain cancer, Mason became free.

Mason was born July 23, 2002, in Manistee, MI, the son of Heather R. (Kistler) and Craig R. Stapley.

Mason is survived by: his wife, Lauren (Guenthardt) Stapley; his dog, Oakley Mae; his parents, Heather (Kistler) and Craig Stapley; his brother, Lucas Stapley (Makenzie Zuiderveen); his grandparents, Maribeth (Dabakey) and Richard Stapley; and his aunt, Gretchen (Stapley) Cooper.

Mason was preceded in death by his grandmother, Donna J Born; his grandfather, John S. Kistler; and his uncle, Robert K. Kistler.

Mason graduated from Brethren High School in 2020 where he was active in a multitude of sports. Arguably one of the most athletic in his class. He loved football and was a big fan of Aaron Rodgers. He proceeded to attend West Shore Community College where he studied and would go on to complete the ever-challenging police academy. He graduated with his Associate Degree in Law Enforcement upon completion and signed on with the Manistee Co. Sheriff's Department. Mason served alongside brave men and women who put others' needs first. After being with the department for a year, it was time for a change. A more peaceful career as a Land Survey Technician, Mason's job was highly rewarding, getting to spend a lot of time in the field alongside his very own father. They often left the office for some lunch and fresh air together.

Mason disregarded his diagnosis when looking at his life. Nothing was a challenge he couldn't face. He found the most joy and had an "escape from reality" in bass fishing but dedicated each season to a different hobby.

In the summer months, Mason enjoyed the occasional camping with family or friends but always managed to have his boat ready to launch. He has many stories (usually with friends) where some part of the great idea adventure they were thinking of, was not thought out to the fullest extent. The only thought: "Let's find the fish". Mason also spent many hours at a boat launch dedicated to fixing boat problems as cold mornings didn't always agree with the motor.

In the fall, Mason thrived off of the adrenaline that came with hunting. For many years while he was growing up, Mason spent time in countless blinds and tree stands alongside his dad and younger brother, Lucas, trying to always get the biggest buck. Year-round, Mason loved to set traps around the surrounding counties for many different animals. His all-time favorite trophy had to be the 40+ pound black beaver. In more recent years, the fall became divided as he found his way into waterfowl hunting. While not always seeing the most birds, there was always a memory and a story to be told. Mason was the type of guy to give you the hunting clothes off of his body if that meant ten more minutes in the blind.

In the coldest months of winter, Mason had no fear of ice-covered lakes and would be the first one checking to see if it was safe enough to fish. In some of the biggest snow and wind storms, Mason could be found bearing the elements drilling new holes just to find the fish while his wife, Lauren, was

nestled away in their warm shanty. When he wasn't fishing on the ice, he was a part of the DT Racing team composed of three generations of Stapley men. The team often raced over the frozen waters of Houghton Lake, where Mason had a milestone win in the 440 shootout. With a newly built sled they called "New Blood", Mason made one practice pass, pulled to the line and the rest was history. He had won.

When springtime rolled around, and the ice was no longer, Mason was once again back on the boat. When he wasn't able to hunt or fish as seasons changed, he referred to this time as the "off-season". Mason got by as days came and went because he viewed the off-season as a shopping spree. Justifying every purchase with "I NEED this!" or "Could you even imagine catching a bass on this?". As dollars were spent, dollars were wasted, and he seemed to always find something cooler or better to use.

When he was actually home, he acquired everyday skills from his parents. Mason became quite the chef, like his mother. He had an eye for large cuts of meat but became a lover of cheese and would consider a plate full of Colby Jack and Mozzarella as a meal if he could. One thing Mason hated was vegetables. When Mason was young and forced to eat cut-up veggies, he intentionally swallowed them whole because he couldn't taste them that way.

Mason met his wife, Lauren, in high school. They graduated together from both Brethren HS and WSCC. Lauren became the "brains" component of most of Mason's adventurous "operations". Before Lauren, Mason hung a "Saturdays Are For The Boys" flag in his room. That flag stayed there until Mason knew Lauren could wholeheartedly handle his weekend agendas. The two of them went on to accomplish many things in life beside one another and faced Mason's cancer together with the ongoing support of close friends and family. Mason and Lauren were recently married on June 22, 2024, in Ludington, MI.

Mason has always been direct and stubborn. He lacked patience at times, but he had something about him that people loved. He was brave and heroic but had an incredibly gentle soul while keeping his "Homecoming King" ego under wraps. Mason loved his family, the biological ones, and those he chose to be a part of his family as well. Mason will live forevermore in our hearts as we navigate life without him. He will be deeply missed.

A Celebration of His life will take place at 3:00 PM on Friday, August 30, 2024, at Terwilliger Funeral Home, in Kaleva. Family will receive friends from 1:00 PM until the time of service at the Funeral Home.

The Terwilliger Funeral Home, in Kaleva, is in charge of his funeral arrangements.
www.terwilligerfuneralhome.com