



Raymond Joseph Nicolai

JUL 3, 1941 - OCT 14, 2022



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Raymond Joseph Nicolai, 81, went to be with the Lord on October 14, 2022, surrounded by his children and grandchildren after a valiant battle with COVID and its effects. Ray was born on July 3, 1941, in Muskegon, Michigan to his parents Florence Lorraine (Kesteloot) and Raymond William Nicolai. When he was just 18, Ray decided he wanted to join the United States Army and enlisted on February 12, 1960. He served in South Korea stationed in the DMZ and later was stationed at Fort Carson, Colorado. He was honorably discharged with the rank of Sergeant on February 11, 1963.

After serving in the Army, Ray came back home to Muskegon and started working at Campbell, Wyant and Cannon. Shortly after that, Ray followed his heart for helping people and in 1964 became a firefighter for the City of Muskegon. He worked there for over 33 years achieving the rank of Lieutenant and retired in 1998. As a dedicated father and provider, he concurrently worked second jobs to support his family including as an EMT Specialist, the Maintenance Technician at Beverly Hills Apartments, and for the City of Norton Shores.

Ray met Joy, the love of his life, while replacing her water heater in her apartment. They married on May 19, 1979 and blended their families with lots of love and fun. Road trips and game nights were highlights of raising their family together.

After his retirement from firefighting, Ray realized that sitting at home was not for him and he worked for several years as a maintenance technician at DeBoer, Inc and for the City of Norton Shores until 2020.

When he wasn't working, Ray loved to spend time in his yard and garden and was known for his beautiful lawn. He also loved to fish and go deer hunting. Ray could fix anything, and his friends and family could always count on his talent for any project they needed help with. He was active



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in the Muskegon Professional Firefighters Union, member of Veterans of Foreign Wars, and was current secretary on the board at Muskegon Federal Credit Union.

He was most happy spending time with his family, especially his grandchildren and great-grandchildren with each of whom he had a special connection. Whether it was sharing a meal, attending one of their sporting events, recitals, or concerts, racing and working on cars, or just spending time at home, he loved every minute of it.

He is survived by his wife, Joyce (Haeger); his son Mark (Michelle) Nicolai; daughters, LuAnn (Greg) Ejsmont and Paula (Richard) Prince; sisters, Bernadette "B" (Paul) Birdsall, Yvonne Petersen, and Cheryl Bohland; grandchildren, Stephanie (Bruce) Cothran, Britney (Chad) Andersen, Jeffrey Schugars, Adam (Amy) Nicolai and Korina Nicolai; Daniel, Elizabeth, his namesake Katie Rae, and Rachel Ejsmont; Christian, Sydney, and Zach Foreman and James and Joey Prince; great grandchildren, Charlie Cothran, Carly Andersen and Baby Boy (Adam & Amy) Nicolai who he was not yet able to meet but he loved already; many nieces, nephews, cousins, and of course friends. Everyone who knew him respected him as an outstanding firefighter, loyal friend, and loving Dad, Grandpa, and most recently Papa. Ray was preceded in death by his parents and his son, Joseph William.

A Funeral Service will be held at 2:30 PM, Saturday, October 22, 2022, at The Lee Chapel of Sytsema Funeral & Cremation Services, 6291 Harvey St., Norton Shores, MI 49444, with a visitation one-hour prior. Visitation with the family will be held from 6-8 PM, Friday, October 21, 2022, at the Lee Chapel. Important to Ray was his commitment to donating blood. His compassion for others and desire to help as many people as he could, led him to donate over 26 gallons of blood over the course of his life. To honor his legacy, Memorial Contributions can be made to the [American Red Cross](#). We know he would also have been thrilled to know he inspired anyone to give blood in his honor as they are able. Share memories with the family and sign the online guestbook at <http://www.sytsemafh.com>.



Events

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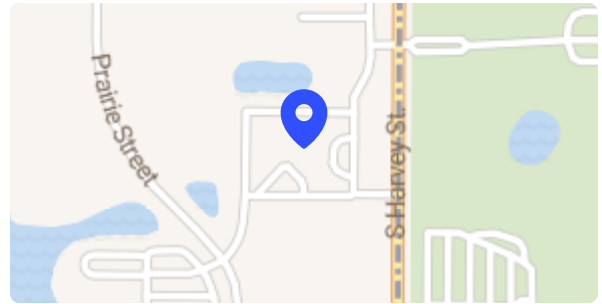
Visitation

 **Friday**, October 21, 2022

 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM ET

 **Sytsema Funeral & Cremation Services - The Lee Chapel**

6291 Harvey St., Norton Shores MI 49444



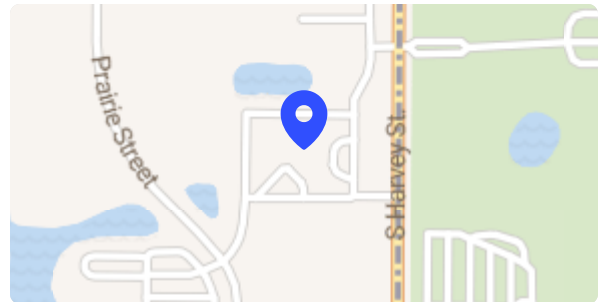
Visitation

 **Saturday**, October 22, 2022

 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM ET


 **Sytsema Funeral & Cremation Services - The Lee Chapel**

6291 Harvey St., Norton Shores MI 49444



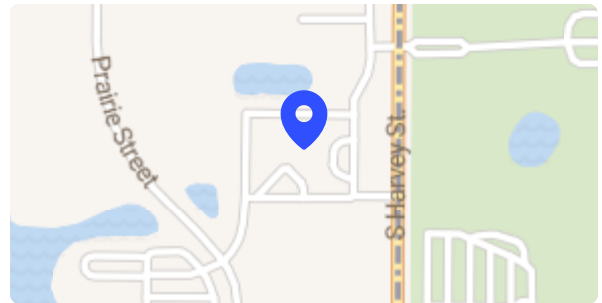
Funeral Service

 **Saturday**, October 22, 2022

 2:30 PM ET

 **Sytsema Funeral & Cremation Services - The Lee Chapel**

6291 Harvey St., Norton Shores MI 49444





Tribute Wall

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Bonnie Lee posted:

So sorry to hear of Ray's passing. I worked with him at Deboer's, he was always ready to help when needed and made a great steak when we had our picnics! He will be missed by all that knew and loved him!♥

October 25 at 1:13 PM



Larry L Bozik posted:

Ray & I were classmates at Catholic Central. We both served in Korea on the DMZ & game home as Sgts. He was my best friend on facebook, we agreed on 'everything'. I miss him already. My Condolances and Prayers to his Family.Larry Bozik

October 21 at 1:40 PM



Karen De Milio Northrup posted:

Iwas sorry to see that Ray passed away. We were classmates (1960). My condolences to his family and friends. Karen DeMilio Northrup

October 21 at 8:58 AM



Diane Hawkins lit a candle in honor of Raymond.



October 21 at 6:24 AM



Anonymous sent an Emerald Garden Basket to the Nicolai family.



October 20 at 6:47 PM



Anonymous sent a Strength & Solace Spray to the Nicolai family.



October 19 at 4:44 PM



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JS

Joanne Schwalm posted:

My deepest sympathy to the entire family. What a sensitive caring man! I'm glad I could share in life events over the years. I always enjoyed when Ray and Joy showed me pictures of the family and gave me updates on them. My prayers to you all to get through this difficult time. With Love

October 19 at 3:42 PM

MP

Michael H. Parsons posted:

Barb (Clark) Parsons & I graduated with Ray from MCC in 1960. We re-connected through the MCC Class of '60 facebook group. We had a number of conversations "on line." He was an insightful, articulate person; We know that he will be missed. Our prayers go out to the family. Michael H. Parsons & Barbara (Clark) Parsons. Class of '60. May he rest in peace.

October 19 at 1:42 PM

MS

Michael Sigman posted:

Ray was a first-rate guy who was a classmate at St. Jean's and Catholic Central. Always friendly and pleasant. It was nice to know Ray. Michael Sigman

October 19 at 10:12 AM

JH

Joan Hasper posted:

Ray was one of those special people. He was one of my favorite Facebook friends from high school. His passion for supporting those less fortunate was awesome. My condolences to his family.

October 18 at 7:40 AM



Anonymous sent a Country Basket Blooms to the Nicolai family.



October 17 at 7:17 PM



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Sharon Rindfusz posted:

Mark and family, my sincerest condolences for your loss. Prayers that you are blessed with strength and peace in the days ahead.

October 17 at 5:19 PM



Anonymous sent a Beautiful in Blue to the Nicolai family.



October 17 at 3:47 PM



Joni Hall posted:

Condolences and sympathy Joy, Mark, Paula & family. You all will remain in our prayers ♥ The Lawie/Hall/Carpenter/Somerville/Valentin Families

October 17 at 3:02 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Raymond by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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