



## Cornelius "Neil" Berry

January 11, 1922 - August 24, 2016

BERRY, Neil John

Passed away peacefully on Wednesday evening, August 24, 2016 at Bronson Hospital. He was born on January 11, 1922 in Kalamazoo, Michigan and remained a lifelong resident of Kalamazoo until his passing. Neil met his wife of 67 years, Gloria Lorentzen, in Kindergarten. In 1944, they were married in Midland Texas, where Neil was stationed, eventually to return to Kalamazoo where they raised their family. Neil was an outstanding athlete and was the top prep athlete in Kalamazoo in the late 30's. He played 3 years of varsity football at Kalamazoo Central leading his team to an undefeated season and the State High School Football championship in 1938. That same year, he was selected as the state's best player and captain of the all-state team. Neil also played on Kalamazoo Central's state championship basketball team in 1937. He played American Legion baseball and was managed in 1936 and 37 by Doctor Homer Stryker. In 1939, Neil was the recipient of the Ki Ki Cuyler award for the most valuable player in the Michigan American Legion State Tournament. Neil played in many local leagues but American Legion is where he caught the eye of Detroit Tiger scout, Wish Egan, who would eventually sign him after Neil attended Western State Teacher's College (today WMU) in 1941. Neil also started on the freshmen football and baseball teams at Western. He turned down a bonus offer by the St. Louis Cardinals to sign with the Detroit Tigers in 1942 as an amateur free agent. He spent the 1942 season with the Winston-Salem Twins of the Piedmont League. Berry spent the next three years, 1943-45, in the United States Army Air Forces serving during WW II. Sargent Berry received an Honorable Discharge in 1946. He spent 1946-47 with the Buffalo Bisons of the International Baseball League. Berry spent the next 5 years with the Detroit Tigers, where he played second base, shortstop, and third base. He finished his major league career with the White Sox and St. Louis Browns in 1953 and the Baltimore Orioles in 1954. Later in 1958, Neil managed the Montgomery Rebels of the Alabama/Florida League for the Detroit organization. He later retired from baseball, returning to Kalamazoo. Since then, he has been in the sporting goods business, then working installing gymnasium floors in high schools and colleges. Before his retirement from the carpenter's union, he worked in a government job for

Kalamazoo County. After baseball Neil became an avid golfer, joining his wife and friends visiting many courses throughout the area. Neil is survived by his two children: Neil "Skip" Berry and Linda Spann of Kalamazoo; 2 grandchildren: Sarah (Ryan) Milley of Kalamazoo, and Elizabeth (David) Stoltz of Pittsburgh, PA; and 7 nieces and nephews. Preceding him in death were his wife of 67 years: Gloria Berry; brother: Gordon Berry; sister: Marilyn Brown; brother-in law: Don Brown; sister: Joyce Dombos; and brother-in-law: Dick Dombos. Visitation will be from 6-8 PM on Monday, Aug. 29, at Langeland Family Funeral Homes, Westside Chapel, 3926 S. 9th Street. A service to celebrate Neil's life will be held at 11:00 AM on Tuesday, Aug. 30, at the funeral home. Rev. Caroline K. Meyers will officiate. Interment will follow in Mt. Ever-Rest Memorial Park.

# Cemetery

## Mt. Ever-Rest Memorial Park Chapel

3941 S. Westnedge Ave.  
Kalamazoo, MI, 49008

# Events

AUG

29

Visitation

06:00PM - 08:00PM

Langeland Family Funeral Homes - Westside Chapel

3926 S. 9th St. , Kalamazoo, MI, US, 49009

AUG

30

Funeral Service

11:00AM

Langeland Family Funeral Homes - Westside Chapel

3926 S. 9th St. , Kalamazoo, MI, US, 49009

# Comments

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“ Linda, your dad was a very special man. We are lucky our families grew up together. Special prayers and thoughts to my first best friend. Love, Susie

Susan Johnson - August 30, 2016 at 10:27 AM

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“ I didn't know Neil, but heard many stories of him from my father, when I was growing up. My father, Joe Barker was the same age as Neil, but I don't know if they knew each other, or my dad just knew of his legend. My dad didn't follow many sports, but every time we saw a baseball game on TV, he would tell me different Neil stories, and what a great player he was. I felt like I knew him myself. My father passed away in 2009, and reading this obit. took me back to those times with my father. Just thought I would share this with your family. I get the feeling that many people my age got to enjoy stories of Neil from their fathers also. Sorry for your loss, hope this gives you a little comfort and pride of Neil.

joe barker jr. - August 29, 2016 at 04:26 PM

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“ Sincerest Sorrow - Blue and White was purchased for the family of Cornelius "Neil" Berry.



August 29, 2016 at 04:04 PM

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“ To Linda and her family  
Although the current time is tough the memories you share will be there for a life time. I always enjoyed your family as they always made me feel like it was home for me. The tennis times we have shared will continue to be fun and exciting. Your dad always has a special place in my heart as we talked tennis, the Tigers(since I grew up near the ball park) and always how proud he was of you and your accomplishments.  
Always in my prayers. See you soon.  
Sue Selke



**Sue Selke** - August 29, 2016 at 01:45 PM

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“ A good friend, spent some great times together, great hands, quick wit, miss you...  
David Bair

**David Bair** - August 29, 2016 at 09:58 AM

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“ Plants-A-Plenty was purchased for the family of Cornelius "Neil" Berry.



August 28, 2016 at 01:19 PM

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“ With love, Lisa McLeod-Chambless purchased the European Sympathy Dish Garden for the family of Cornelius "Neil" Berry.



**With love, Lisa McLeod-Chambless** - August 28, 2016 at 01:43 AM

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“ This man was magnificent and a very interesting man. The first time I met him he sat and talked about his wonderful baseball career and all the magnificent things he did during his life. I certainly enjoyed all of his stories. I could have listened to him all night. He had a great life; that doesn't change the fact, no matter the age, that we are not ready to give them up. Please know I send my deepest sympathy and prayers for comfort, strength, and love.



**Ginger Stoltz** - August 26, 2016 at 11:04 PM