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November 19, 2014 12:01AM

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H. Eugene "Gene" Cooley

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H. Eugene "Gene" Cooley, 74, of Mackinaw City, formerly of Tecumseh, Mich., passed away Nov. 10, 2014, near Kenton, Mich. while at deer camp. He was preceded in death by his parents, Charles Cooley and Eula Bush Cooley, and his sister, Connie McLane. He is survived by his wife, Jo Ann; sons, Daniel and Matthew (Shannon) of Mackinaw City and Christopher of Tampa, Fla.; and his daughter, Ann (Gordon Penn) of New York City. He is also survived by his sisters, Nancy Jeffries and Karen Despres, and four great-grandchildren. He will be greatly missed by his grandchildren, Kristine, Jonathan, Samantha and Chloe Cooley.

Born March 29, 1940, Gene was raised in Charlotte, Mich., where he served as president of his graduating class and excelled in athletics. He attended Western Michigan University on a baseball scholarship, where he pitched in three consecutive College World Series. After graduating from WMU with a degree in public education, he signed a professional baseball contract with the Pittsburgh Pirates and played in the minor leagues for several years.

His public education career began as a high school teacher in Athens, Mich. After one year of teaching, he became the elementary school principal then moved to the Hanover-Horton School District where he quickly advanced to Superintendent of Schools at the age of 26. He continued his education and obtained advanced degrees in education leadership from Michigan State University. Gene and Jo then settled in Tecumseh, Mich. in 1971, where they happily raised their family and he dedicated his career to the public school system, serving as superintendent from 1984 until his retirement in 1992.

Gene and Jo have enjoyed their semi-retirement in Northern Michigan running the Tee Pee Campground in Mackinaw City, which has been family-owned and operated since 1969. Gene was a community leader and very active in many local organizations, including the Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, Mackinaw City Chamber of Commerce, Mackinaw Township Board of Review, Chamber Ambassadors, Church of the Straits, Cheboygan Memorial Hospital Board of Directors and many others. Gene was a loving husband, a proud father, a talented whistler, and true friend to the many people that crossed his path. He will be missed by us all.

Services for Gene will be held 11 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 22 at the Church of the Straits, 307 N. Huron Ave., Mackinaw City, Mich., 49701. The Rev. David Wallis will officiate. The family will receive friends one hour before the service.

A memorial service will also be held at 7 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 24 at Tecumseh High School, Tecumseh, Mich.

In lieu of flowers, please donate in Gene's name to Mackinaw City Schools/Project Close-Up, 609 W. Central Ave., Mackinaw City, Mich., 49701 or the Lions Club of Mackinaw City, P.O. Box 760, Mackinaw City, Mich., 49701.

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