



Walter H. North

October 31, 2014

Former Michigan Senator Walter North, 81, of St. Ignace passed away peacefully on October 31, 2014 at the Evergreen Living Center, concluding a remarkable life that began on January 31, 1933 when he was born to Robert and Mary (nee Wolfe) North in Kirksville, Missouri. Walt was raised in Battle Creek, Michigan by his mother and grandmother, and he was a standout student and All State basketball player at Battle Creek Central High School where he graduated. He received a basketball scholarship to Western Michigan University, but a hand injury prevented him from playing. Walt interrupted his studies to enlist in the Air Force in 1952, served in the Korean War at Kunsan AFB from 1953-1954 as a staff sergeant, and was a proud veteran. He married his high school sweetheart, Sally Ann Greensmith, in 1953. After his service to his country, Walt resumed his education and was awarded a business degree at WMU.

Walt loved politics, and he made an unsuccessful run for Michigan State House in 1964. He jokingly blamed Barry Goldwater, at the head of the ballot, for his defeat. With a young family to provide for, Walt took a job with the Michigan Treasury Department, and this eventually led to an opportunity to move the family 'up north' in 1966 to become Comptroller at the Mackinac Bridge Authority. Walt eventually became Executive Secretary of the Authority in 1983, and he retired from that position in 1992. He possessed an immense knowledge of the "Mighty Mac", which he enjoyed sharing with groups and

tourists in speaking events, and a daily "radio minute" broadcast.

The passion for politics never left Walt, and he was elected as State Senator for Michigan's sprawling 37th District in 1994, where he served two terms. Walt was well-known and respected in Lansing, and he used his eight years in that office to promote the economic and humanitarian needs of the residents of northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula. Perhaps as a result of his humble upbringing, Walt was a fierce advocate for the less fortunate constituents in his district. He was proud of his involvement in numerous accomplishments which include the new hospital and nursing home facilities in St. Ignace; new medical clinics on both Mackinac and Beaver Islands; the expansion of the St. Ignace municipal marina; a new State Police post in St. Ignace; the Newberry Correctional Facility; and various Sault Tribe EDC projects including Little Bear East arena. During his tenure at the Mackinac Bridge Authority, he was instrumental in leading the growth of the Labor Day Bridge Walk event, as well as developing a comprehensive maintenance program for the bridge. After leaving the Senate, Walt served on multiple community foundation boards, the Lake Superior State University Foundation Board , and the Mackinac Straits Hospital Board.

Walt leaves behind his wife of 61 years, Sally; four sons and their families, Thomas, David, James (Kimberly) and Michael (Mary Joe) North, all residing in northern Michigan. Seven grandchildren will dearly miss their Grandpa Walt. He was preceded in death by his parents. Walt had a life-long fondness for animals that continued until his death, including dogs, cats and horses. As a young boy he would bring home turtles, mice, frogs and whatever else he could catch, to the dismay of his mother. Walt & Sally were founding members of the Friends of the Animals group that continues to care for pets in the eastern U.P. Walt's other hobbies included boating, playing cribbage, shooting pool, and spending time with his family.

All services will be held at the St. Ignace United Methodist Church, with visitation on Tuesday, November 4, from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m., and the funeral service on Wednesday, November 5 at 11:00 a.m. Interment will be at Lakeside Cemetery in St. Ignace in a family plot, appropriately overlooking the Mackinac Bridge.

The family appreciates the remarkable care that was provided to Walt at Mackinac Straits Hospital and the Evergreen Living Center, and asks that any gifts in his memory should be directed to the Mackinac Straits Health Foundation in St. Ignace. Envelopes are available from Dodson Funeral Home, 240 McCann Street, St. Ignace, Mi. 49781 who assisted the family with arrangements.

Tribute Wall



“ *Walter H. North*

October 05, 2023 at 09:54 AM



“ *Walter H. North*

October 02, 2023 at 10:14 PM



“ *Walter H. North*

September 01, 2022 at 07:49 PM



“ *It was so wonderful to witness the support of so many friends and family on the loss of our beloved father Walter. It has been a tribute to all the lives he touched to read each comment- a special thanks to the Dodson's. You're all the best and the reason we have such peace moving forward.*

*Sincerely,
David North*

son David North - December 04, 2014 at 04:30 PM



“ *Sally and family, thank you for sharing him with the rest of us"under the bridge". My family still remembers him taking them to lunch and for a sweet treat at the Peanut Shop. He is forever in our hearts.*

Kristie Denbrock - November 16, 2014 at 09:38 AM

DG

“ SALLY, TOM and family,
I am so sorry for your loss. Walt was such a strong, knowledgable, kind man who would talk to any one. I always loved visiting with you and Walter and hearing your pain for the a animals at the animal shelter.
RIP Walter

DAWN DEMPSEY HUSKEY
your friend from Texas

GRONDIN

Dawn Huskey Grondin - November 10, 2014 at 08:46 AM

DC

“ Jim,

I am very sorry for your loss!!! It sounds like you dad was quite an inspiration to his family and those that were fortunate enough to have known him. You and your family are in my thoughts and prayers. God Bless .

Dick Cromell - November 05, 2014 at 12:35 PM

DD

“ *Walt was a great friend to our family. In fact, he wrote me a personal recommendation for my first teaching job. I always enjoyed his humor and appreciated his words of encouragement. He was an exemplary model of public service that will long be remembered in the eastern U.P. God's blessings to you Sally and family.*

Deanna Draze - November 05, 2014 at 09:38 AM

RH

“ *Sally and the boys, it is often that I think of Walt and all of you. He was a great neighbor, friend and mentor to my family and me. His memory of names and faces was amazing. It was great to see his traits pass on to the boys. As our memories of him console us, I hope that they do you as well.*

Rick Holle - November 04, 2014 at 06:27 PM

AM

“ *Dear Sally and family.. Norm and I as well as the other members of the Riverview condominiums in Sault Sainte Marie, wish to tell you how sorry we are to hear of the passing of our old neighbor and friend. All of us enjoyed you both so much. They all want to extend their sympathy and hope to continue their friendship with you. Please call upon me if you have anything that I may be able to help you with.. Perhaps some more computer lessons. Sincerely...Angela Morehouse, president of the Riverview condominiums..and friend.*

Angela Morehouse - November 04, 2014 at 09:35 AM

BC

“ *Walt was such a remarkable man. He will be deeply missed. My thoughts and prayers are with the family. With deepest sympathy.
Gary and Billie*

Billie Cardona - November 04, 2014 at 08:48 AM

DG

“ *if you're Lucky, you will meet a man and woman like Sen. North and Sally , maybe once or twice in your life. If you're smart you'll realize it. I wish I had a dollar for every great story I can tell. Most will remain in our thoughts privately , but you will never hear a bad word said about our dear friends at the store. Rest in peace dear friend. !*

Dennis and Nancy Goodwin - November 03, 2014 at 08:35 PM

PB

“ *Walt was a true blue friend. He was the welcome wagon extraordinaire-when we moved to St. Ignace in April of 1979. He was the reason we attended the Methodist Church and joined many other local organizations. His honesty and personality made him the great comptroller and senator. Sally, and family you are in our thoughts and prayers. He will be sorely missed.*

Peter and Carol Beukema - November 03, 2014 at 05:35 PM

PG

“ *Sally and Family: So sorry to hear of Walt's passing. We will remember his quick wit and ready smile. The Senator was a great advocate for Northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula. We will miss him. There is comfort in knowing his legacy will live on. Our thoughts and prayers are with the North family.*

Pat and Deb Gagliardi - November 03, 2014 at 05:25 PM

MV

“ *There are not many people in this world like Walt North. I had the pleasure and honor to have had Walt as a mentor for nearly eight years as his Chief of Staff in the state Senate. Working with him at his side on a daily basis was an invaluable life experience. Walt was the consummate public official, always looking out for the people he served. I'm proud to share that many of the advice and counsel Walt gave me as a young and eager staffer I've been fortunate to pass along in several of the positions I've held as a manager; and more importantly, they have made me a better person. Walt was truly loved. Walt's love, wisdom, jokes, and stories will live on...what a true testament to a great man. May God bless Walt, Sally and the entire family.*

Martin Van Valkenburg - November 03, 2014 at 02:24 PM

CH

“ So saddened to learn of Walt's passing. I worked with Walt when he was a State Senator engaged in transportation issues and I chaired the transportation subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee. We reached across party lines to work together in days when that was still a real possibility in Lansing. I respected Walt tremendously and I liked him for the true statesman that he was. I knew his health was failing in recent years but it still comes as a bit of a shock to know that he is gone. He was a pillar; just one of those that you sort of always thought would be here. Rest in peace my friend.

Clark Harder - November 03, 2014 at 02:04 PM

CS

“ I was saddened to learn of Walt's passing but am comforted in the belief that he now resides in a much better place. My initial contacts with Walt and Sally were related to our mutual association with Lake Superior State University. Since then, I have experienced the full depth of their generosity in time and treasure for numerous individual causes as well as the betterment of the region. Walt, Sally and family have been significant supporters of LSSU for decades. As current LSSU Foundation Chair, I am humbled to follow in his footsteps and we have lost a true friend of our beloved university. My heartfelt condolences go to Sally, family and all who knew this great man.

Chuck Schmidt - November 03, 2014 at 11:55 AM

BA

“ To the North Family,
Being one of the newest members to the Mackinac Bridge Authority,
I never had the pleasure of meeting Walt. In my short time I have
been on the Authority I have heard his name mentioned many
times. He is well respected for all his contributions and he is fondly
remembered for his wonderful personality.

*I truly send my sincere condolences to your family. He was a great
man, who gave of himself and made Michigan a better place.*

*Sincerely,
Barbara Arens*

Barbara Arens - November 03, 2014 at 07:09 AM

DN

“ I had the pleasure of becoming an acquaintance and then friend of
Walt when I was deputy Secretary of State. We had a museum near
the Mac. Bridge and he worked "beyond the ball of duty" to help our
efforts because it meant more tourism \$\$\$ w/o adding cheap junk to
the area. As a senator, he was honest, insightful and very
understanding of the difficulties faced by the unfortunate in the UP
and those below the bridge. Great man.

Dennis Neuner - November 02, 2014 at 08:04 PM

KP

“ It was great to work with Walt on all things for northern Michigan, the eastern Upper Peninsula and Lake Superior State University. I had the pleasure of meeting Walt and Sally North when I was a youth counselor for Mackinac County in 1978. Walt was always engaged and a terrific advocate for the area. He was a good GOP member and I a good DEM. That meant that we were involved in making Michigan a better place for all of us. It was never about party affiliation. Walt was a dedicated leader for northern Michigan/EUP and always looked out for the folks from the area. He made a difference and leaves a lasting legacy of good will and development for the people and the area. Senator Walter North is someone who I can call a "statesman." My sympathies are extended to Sally, their children, and grand children.

Kathy "K.P." Pelleran - November 02, 2014 at 06:22 PM

SK

“ Dear Sally, we are so sorry to hear of Walters passing. I remember him always busy having somewhere to go, but he always took time out of his day to be friendly and helpful to us when we were in town. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. With deepest sympathy, Fred, Susan, and Samantha Kunz

Susan Kunz - November 02, 2014 at 05:14 PM

JS

“ Walt was one of the classiest public servants in Michigan during both his service for the Mackinac Bridge Authority and an elected member of the Michigan State Senate, Walt epitomized the best spirits of those who serve in elected office. Never met anyone who didn't like and respect Walt. Sally and his children and grandchildren should take comfort that his record is one of honor.

Jim Storey - November 02, 2014 at 05:07 PM

JH

“ *Sending sincere condolences. May your faith and love of each other sustain the Walter North Family during this grievous time in your lives.*

Janis A. Holle - November 02, 2014 at 04:47 PM

PD

“ *Sen. North was a true advocate of Northern Michigan. It didn't matter what side of the Bridge you were from he was there to help. It was always a pleasure to see Walt and Sally. My heartfelt condolences to the North Family.*

Paul Desy - November 02, 2014 at 03:46 PM

KB

“ *Walter, a man always on the move, ready with a hearty hello & sometimes a quip or story that would make you laugh or smile. "Rest in Peace Dear Man." With much Sympathy & Love to Sally & the Family.*

Karen Beaune - November 02, 2014 at 03:25 PM