



Louis Behling

January 26, 2024

Louis (Lou) Behling died in hospice care in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan on January 26th, 2024 at the age of 92, after a lengthy illness.

He was the youngest of four children born to Louis A Behling and Norvia Newman: Fae, Ben, Loyal and Louis. His father Louis immigrated from Germany with his parents as a toddler and the family settled in the Boyne City/Charlevoix area. His mother, Norvia, grew up in a Native village on Garden Island in Lake Michigan. She met the German-borne lumberman/carpenter while working as a housekeeper in Petoskey. They married and settled in Sault Ste. Marie where the young couple opened Behling Lumber Yard on Easterday Ave. As a toddler, Louis contracted Polio and was hospitalized on an iron lung for a time. Later in life, Post-Polio Syndrome caused debilitating, crippling issues in his right hand and feet. His mother Norvia died of a heart attack when Louis was 17 years old. (This was shortly before treatment or high blood pressure was available.) His older sister Fae took over as mother to him. They remained extraordinarily close throughout her life.

Louis graduated from Soo High in 1950 and attended Ferris College, for Building Trades. He returned to the Sault where he worked and eventually took over and managed the business begun by his father. He married Maxine Bennett in 1953 and they had three children. Many homes in the Sault and surrounding area were built or remodeled by the Behlings and are housing families to this day. In the early 70's Behling Lumber was sold to Lock City

Manufacturing and Louis worked there until his retirement. P.S. All three of his children (even the girls) grew up to also have carpentry skills. His son Steve has been a carpenter his entire life. His oldest daughter Melanie can remember as a very young girl being charged as the “go-for” on job sites. She knew the difference between a slot-head and a Phillips screwdriver before turning four years of age and worked building musical instruments (including Celtic harps) and teaching music. Brenda does house restoration with a specialty in expert tile setting.

After a divorce from Maxine, Lou married Penny Hamachek in 1977 and became stepfather to her daughter Lisa Dunn whom he legally adopted. Lisa is an avid gardener and works at a local greenhouse and nursery. Lou and Penny were married for over 40 years before they divorced several years ago. Lou was a man of many interests. He loved cars, trucks and tractors, (especially old ones). He liked boating and water skiing; both at Monocle Lake where his sister Fae had a cottage and at Cedarville where his father had a residence on the water for many years. He earned a private pilot’s license and had several exploits in his Cessna 150. He loved to play pool and kept a pool or billiards table at hand most of his life. He bowled with a league for many years. He played cribbage often with all the relatives until he was 90 years of age when his hands could no longer manage cards and pegs.

He had a great affinity for running out of gas: cars, trucks, lawn mowers, tractors, boats and heavy equipment. His oversight in this even once caused engine failure in his Cessna. This resulted in him having an emergency landing on US2 and managing to coast into a gas station to get enough fuel to get back to the airport.

The two greatest loves of his life were music and dogs. Even with his crippled hand he played the organ and piano by ear beautifully. He was especially fond of ballads from the 40’s and 50’s. He spent hours listening to his CD collection of the great crooners, night club singers, and old church hymns.

He owned dozens of dogs throughout his life. The first dog he remembers was a terrier type named Brownie, who ran about the Hillside Steet neighborhood

digging up gardens, and making his way into sheds and garages to shake rats to death. There were many more dogs after Brownie. Each of them well loved. Each one the “Best Dog Ever.”

Lou was a Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians member. The tribe was of great assistance in his later years with providing essentials for his health care and comfort. The family owes them their thanks.

Louis was preceded in death by all his siblings. He is survived by his three children: Melanie Wiltse (John), Steven Behling (Gabriela), Brenda Strack, Stepdaughter Lisa Poirier, 9 Grandchildren and over a dozen Great-Grandchildren.

Memorial gifts can be sent to the Chippewa County Humane Society, Best of Friends Humane Society, or Hospice House of the Sault.