



Richard Leroy Benson

February 26, 1931 - January 9, 2026

Richard Leroy Benson, age 94, of Raber, Michigan, died on January 9, 2026 at Freighter View Assisted Living. He was born on February 26, 1931, in Detroit, Michigan, to Russell and Sarah (Lane) Benson.

Richard Benson was raised in Detroit but his heart was always in Raber, in the Upper Peninsula, where he retired and remained until his death. As a young man, he became a draftsman and worked in the auto industry for forty years, but he had an enduring love for travel. He traveled to over thirty countries over the years, having adventures such as watching baseball games at midnight in Alaska, riding camels in Egypt, visiting Mt. Everest in Nepal, and riding with a dog sled team across northern Ontario. He and his wife Patsy taught his two daughters, Janet and Amy, to love nature and travel by tenting across North America and on his grandfather's land in Raber each summer.

Richard was an ardent environmentalist and gardener. He was an early adopter of composting and organic growing techniques, careful to protect the land from chemicals. He belonged to the Sault Naturalists group, as well as to national environmental organizations, and was always ready to learn and share tips with other nature lovers. He was a good steward of the land, protecting endangered species and caring for birds. In Raber, he loved to be out in nature as much as possible, hunting and fishing with his family, hiking, sailing, kayaking, and gardening.

He was always curious to learn more about history, engineering, other cultures, and he loved music from all over the world, and he had a special love for bluegrass and Willie Nelson. He tried never to miss the Pickford Pickers sessions every Saturday.

A member of Lutheran churches all his life, most recently Bethel Lutheran in Cedarville, Michigan, one of his proudest accomplishments was going on forty-eight mission trips with the Lutheran Ministry. In Slovakia, Russia, Poland, and Nicaragua, among other countries, Richard would help build and maintain Lutheran schools, churches, and community centers. In Nicaragua, he built a food distribution center for people in need. Before these trips, he would gather donations and collect soap, pencils and paper, and other supplies to distribute. It gave him great pleasure to combine his faith, love of travel, and work ethic to help others.

Richard is survived by his sister, Joyce Melling and her family; his daughters, Janet Benson and Amy Benson; granddaughter, Eden Hungerford; great-granddaughter, Sterling; and grandson, Beals Repetto.

Richard was preceded in death by his parents, Russell and Sarah.

He loved and worked hard for his family, and he will be missed by his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchild.

A Memorial Service will be held in July of 2026.

Condolences may be given to the family at www.familylifefh.com.

Obituary as submitted by family.

Tribute Wall

DH

“ Richard was always so enjoyable to chat with. Extremely friendly and interesting with his tales of travel and helping others around the world. I know God welcomed him with open arms. God's speed our friend.

Dobby Holland - January 12 at 01:52 PM

AB

Thanks for your note, Dobby-- that means a lot. We'll have a memorial for this this summer at some point.

Amy Benson - January 12 at 08:26 PM

KI

“ I met him thru yoga classes and thought he was a very interesting man. Whenever we met he always greeted me and stopped and talked.

kim - January 11 at 07:16 PM

AB

He loved his yoga group. I was glad to have gone with him once while visiting.

Amy Benson - January 12 at 08:26 PM

SP

“ My dearest Uncle Rich, You have always and will always have a special place in my heart. I have a lifetime of wonderful memories of you, too many to count, that will live on - from fishing with you as a child to hiking the property line as an adult. You always made time together special. Your loving niece, Sharon

Sharon Ellen Palazzolo - January 10 at 11:14 AM

AB

Beautiful memories, Sharon--thank you.

Amy Benson - January 12 at 08:27 PM

MT

“*Rest in peace my cousin. I always hold the memories of the hikes we made to the fossil beds and the little get togethers afterwards.*

Marlene Thornton - January 09 at 05:14 PM

AB

Thank you, Marlene! He loved walking back there with family and visitors.

Amy Benson - January 12 at 08:28 PM

TW

Richard was a member of Raber Area Sportmen's Club, so many of us enjoyed having him attend different club events, we always asked if we could fix him a to go box of all the wonderful food that people brought, he would light up like a candle and gladly accept, so many of us became respectful friends, he will miss him, R.I.P. friend! Teri Woods-Club secretary

Teri Woods - January 13 at 06:27 PM