

Lawrence F. Piper (1945 - 2019)



Piper, Lawrence F. Grand Blanc Born: August 13, 1945. Died: April 20, 2019. Larry Piper was a Gentle Man. He was a man of gentleness. He was born on the last day of the Second World War, a day when peace broke out in the world and unbeknownst to him, his parents or his three brothers at the time, that really became a metaphor of his life. Larry had many loves, a few of which will be described here. But the greatest of all his loves was his love and steadfast devotion to his wife, Joanne Hartranft Piper. The two met in 1984, Larry a real estate appraiser and Joanne a grant writer for the City of Flint. They were married in the First Presbyterian Church where Larry's best men were his brothers Bob, Randy, Chuck and his lifelong friend, confidant and cousin John Siler. It proved to be a perfect and auspicious beginning of Joanne and Larry's life together. It was definitely the most beautifully emotional of all Piper family weddings. Larry was an individual who had his own ideas in the echo chamber of this world. He grew up on the East Side of Flint in the 1950's and 60's. He was a varsity swimmer at Flint Central High School. After graduation he enrolled in Albion College. It was during his college years that Larry started demonstrating his independence. He graduated in 1967, just as the Crisis in Vietnam was becoming a full fledged War. Apropos of the time (September 1967) Larry was accepted into the MBA program at Western Michigan University. This continued his student deferment from the draft and all was going smoothly until Thanksgiving when Larry announced to his family and friends that he would terminate his post graduate education because he had enlisted in the United States Army. So, in 1968, at the height of the War and when it was becoming very unpopular, Larry went off to Basic Training at Fort Dix. He became a soldier. Through a set of circumstances, or fate, or something, he was in a room containing his fellow soldiers on completion of Training. The occupants were divided into two groups - one went to Southeast Asia and one went to West Germany. Larry went to the American Army base in Stuttgart. In Germany, he was given, of all things, a .45 caliber side arm and he became an MP. He had to have been one of the most gentle of MP's in the Army. In any event, service in Europe was not without its risks, because during his service, the unpredictable Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia and as an MP he was called up to that border. When his tour of duty ended, he turned in his .45 and returned home to work at the family business for a couple of years. Then he announced to his family and friends the surprising news that he had joined the Peace Corps. So from soldier to man of peace he served for several years helping the people of the Solomon Islands. When he returned from the Solomon's, the Flint Journal assigned a reporter to check on his experience. When she asked what was next for him he said he was not going back to the family business. He drew on his very dry and occasionally hilarious sense of humor by telling her he would do anything - "dig ditches or run General Motors". Larry loved athletic activities and as an adult he was a serious bicycle rider. He rode long distances and enjoyed his friends who rode with him. He also loved the Big Brothers organization of Flint because it gave him a lifelong relationship with his Little Brother Dutch Wesener and he cherished that relationship for the rest of his life. He and Joanne also loved to sail in the Great Lakes where they kept a sailboat for many years. Later in life he became challenged by Parkinson's, but he continued his contacts with friends through weekly breakfasts and lunches. His battle with Parkinson's will remain an inspiration to all who knew him. He is survived by his beautiful wife Joanne, two brothers, lots of nieces, nephews and their young children. The family wishes to thank their wonderful caregivers; Julie, Venita, Tina, Ashley and Tiana. Services will be held 11 AM Friday, April 26, 2019 at First Presbyterian of Flint, 746 S. Saginaw St., Flint. The family will receive friends from 10 AM - 11 AM Friday at the church. In lieu of flowers contributions may be sent to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Flint, 410 E. Second Street, Flint Michigan 48502 (www.bbbs.org). Arrangements entrusted to Sharp Funeral Homes, Fenton Chapel, 1000 W. Silver Lake Rd., Fenton. Tributes may be shared at www.sharpfuneralhomes.com.