

Wayne Allen Agosa

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May 20, 1947 - May 22, 2023

Wayne Allen Agosa was born on May 20, 1947 in Northport, the son of Albert and Emma (Manitouwash) Agosa. He had four brothers, Glen Hillyer and Roger Bartholomew, Jack Hillyer and Elvis Muholland.

Wayne left Northport for a while, but In 1987 he moved back to Northport and a few short years later, in 1990, married Linda Wiedbrauk. Having grown up in foster care inspired him to also foster children. For 25 years, Wayne and his wife Linda, welcomed all children who needed a home and loved them as their own. In all, he had ten children: Ronald (Ruthann) Agosa, Michael (Kristi) Agosa, Marcus Agosa, Angela (Tony) Markowski, Cheyenne (John) Gipson, Shyla (Shane) Shocko, Dakota Agosa, Claudia Agosa, Grace Oskaboose, and Anthony Oskaboose, and 20 grandchildren. Wayne loved spending time with his family, singing, hunting and listening to Elvis and Johnny Cash. Other times he would take his kids on adventures to experience life.

As well as being a devoted husband, father, and grandfather, Wayne was also an incredible friend. Since elementary school, he and his lifelong friend, Jim Maxwell, loved running away to go fishing. He also loved working on his 1966 Plymouth Sports Fury III.

After a prolonged illness, Wayne died on May 22, 2023, 2 days after his 76th birthday, surrounded by his loved ones.

Leelanau Enterprise



Heide Keye Biederman  
March 29, 1940 - April 20, 2023

Heide Keye Biederman was born on March 29, 1940, in Pleasant Ridge, Michigan. Her parents were Vernon and Elizabeth Keye. A proud Detroiter, Heidi attended Ferndale High School in the early 1950's (along with the Motown group who would form the Spinners in 1954. The Spinners produced a string of hit songs during the next two decades.)

Heide was the third generation of her family to graduate from Beloit College, and it is also where she met her husband, William Biederman. Heide and William eventually moved to the Chicago area (Glen Ellyn, Illinois) where they raised their two sons, William and Robert. She worshiped her 4 grandchildren Jake, Elizabeth, Kate, and Abby. Heidi showered her family and friends with unconditional love and overwhelming positivity.

She began her career as a first grade teacher and kept in touch with many of her students throughout her life. She worked tirelessly to ensure that all students had access to a quality education and was instrumental in passing legislation that improved the lives of countless children. She served as the first Executive Director of the Large Unit District Association (LUDA), where she represented the 56 largest school districts in Illinois. She also worked for the Illinois Association of School Boards. Heidi was an elected Board Member and President of School District 41 from 1976-81.

Heidi embraced every moment of retirement . After she retired, she traveled, and followed her artistic passions. She enthusiastically appreciated beauty both in the arts and in nature, especially at her family home in Omena.

Heidi Keye Biederman passed away peacefully on April 20, 2023 in St. Charles, Illinois at the age of 83, surrounded by her loving family.

Leonard Memorial Funeral Home, Chicago Tribune, Leelanau Enterprise



Robert Otto Koch  
June 11, 1933 - November 20, 2023

Robert “Bob” Otto Koch was born on June 11, 1933 in Detroit, MI, the only child of Otto and Dorothy Koch. In his youth, he became an Eagle Scout, enjoyed playing hockey, raced runabout boats, and loved spending time on his Chris-Craft. His favorite car was his 1960 Corvette convertible.

In 1955, he met Gail. They were married two years later, and they just recently celebrated 66 years of marriage. They had two children, Ronald, and Kathleen, and four grandchildren.

Bob graduated from the University of Michigan in 1955 with a Bachelor's of Science in Mechanical Engineering. This led to a 47 year career as an engineer in the aviation and automotive industries.

His adventurous spirit, love of steam trains, and passion for photography allowed Bob and Gail to travel to 65 different countries; many of the countries they traveled to multiple times. He was an avid photographer and always focused to get the perfect shot of whatever it was he was capturing. He specifically had a passion for Chinese steam engines and this passion led him to travel to China and South Africa multiple times. There he would watch and photograph steam engines that he spent a lot of time researching and learning about. His knowledge on his passion was second to none. Their travels allowed them meet and befriend many wonderful people all throughout the world.

Here is one of Bob’s outstanding photos, which appeared in the Bloemfontein-Kimberley chapter of Soul of A Railway. Taken in 1980, it shows a pair of 25NC 4-8-4 engines blasting away from the water stop at Paardeberg on the Modder River, en route to East London Harbor with a load of export grain from the Western Transvaal. (Credit Soul of a Railway)



Bob especially enjoyed his time spent at the family cottage in Omena, MI. This past June, family and friends from all over gathered to help him celebrate his 90th birthday. Robert "Bob" Otto Koch, of Commerce Township, MI, passed away on November 20, 2023 and was buried at Omena Hillcrest Cemetery.

[legacy.com](https://www.legacy.com), Leelanau Enterprise, Soul of a Railway



Madeline McCardle Kotlas  
1986- May 26, 2023

Madeline McCardle Kotlas was born in 1986, the daughter Janet Stephenson and John Carlock. She had one sister, Sydney Carlock. Her maternal grandmother is Eleanor Stephenson, and her aunts are Cathy Stephenson and Elizabeth Carlock and she has many cousins and extended family. Her love for her family, for animals, for literature, and for the natural world, and was poignant. Maddie had a poet's soul and a luminous spirit. She had a unique perspective on life, brimming with empathy for others, indignation for injustice, and desire to bring joy, fun, laughter, and love into the lives of everyone she met. A genius at guiding and nurturing children, her brilliant career as a teacher was tragically cut short by illness.

In 2021 she married Reid Kotlas, who she had been devoted to and partner to for nearly 15 years after meeting when they were students at Hampshire College in Massachusetts in 2004. She delighted in providing personalized gifts for every guest at her wedding. She loved to give from early on, giving away her crayons to friends in the first grade as well as her students when she was a teacher.

Not long after she advanced to an administrative position in the school system, Maddie learned she had Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, a genetic disorder that affects connective tissues in the body she and could no longer work. She passed away on May 26th, 2023, surrounded by her beloved and loving family. Maddie McCardle Kotlas was wise, gentle, fierce, goofy, witty, generous, thoughtful, and so kind.

Knight Funeral Homes, Valley News, and Maddie's GoFundme



Halcyon Dorothy Rennie Nelson  
1927 - April 3, 2023

"Halcyon Dorothy Nelson was born in 1927 in Lansing, the daughter of Charles "Chick" Rennie and Margaret Wheelock Anderson. She spent her childhood in Traverse City along with her brother, John, who was three years older than she was, and her sister, Martha Flynn, who was two years younger.

In 1933 when Halcyon was 6 years old, her parents and two other businesses partners were taking a small plane across Lake Michigan when it crashed into the lake near Frankfort. Lashing two air cushions from the cabin to a gas tank which had been attached to the wing, the men made a float which was able to support just one person, Margaret, Halcyon's mother. The others hung on in the cold water, but eventually Halcyon's father drowned along with the two other passengers. Margaret was adrift on that buoyed gas tank for two days before she was saved. She was exhausted, her lips were parched, and she was blistered red by the sun during her ordeal, but she was fundamentally unhurt by her 33 hours adrift on Lake Michigan.

Two years after the crash, in 1935, Margaret remarried Carl Anderson. Halcyon was 8 years old. According to a family member, Margaret rarely discussed the crash: it was not something she wanted to relive. Margaret and Carl lived and raised their children in Traverse City, but owned the "Yellow House" in Omena which had been in the Anderson family.

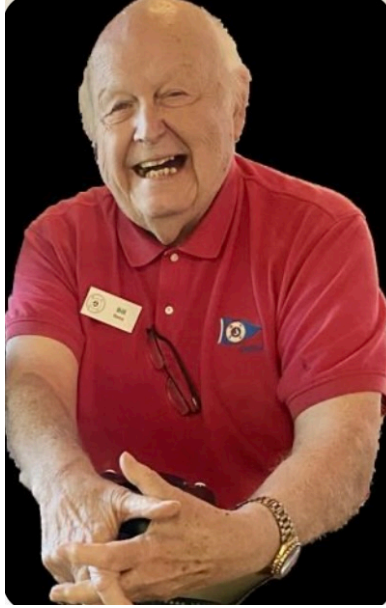
Halcyon grew up in Traverse City, and when she was 19, in 1946, she married Jerome "Jerry" Nelson, her high school sweetheart. Together they had two children, Mary Rockwood and John D. Nelson, and eventually four grandchildren. They lived and raised the two children also in Traverse City.

Halcyon worked as a tech at Munson Hospital looking at slides to see if they contained cancer cells. Jerry was an Engineer, working for Parsons Corporation making helicopter blades. During that time, he attended Northwestern Michigan College, transferring to the University of Michigan, where he received his Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering.

In 1973 Jerry lost his job when there was a downturn in the business, and that same year Halcyon's mother died. Halcyon inherited the Yellow House in Omena. It was a good time to relocate. They moved to Omena.

Halcyon was a member of Club 21 and was well liked by the Omena community. She was "kind, fun, and a good friend" one friend remembered.

Halcyon Dorothy Nelson passed away when she was 96 the morning of April 3" in Traverse City, where they had moved when Jerry needed more health care. .



William Andrew "Bill" Renz  
March 31, 1934 - September 17, 2023

William Andrew Renz was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on March 31st, 1934. Four years later, even though it was the middle of the depression in 1938, Bill's parents, Dr. Andrew C. Renz and Marjorie Renz, purchased a cottage on Omena Bay.

Bill was just 4 years old but this cottage remained his touchstone for his entire life. He grew up spending summers there, and met and married Rat (Carolyn ("Rat") Smith) in Omena. He made lifelong friends in Omena, and was a founding member of the Omena Traverse Yacht Club, recently receiving a lifetime membership as the oldest surviving original member. He served as commodore there, as had his father and father-in-law.

Their three children, Bill, Andrew, and Cynthia, also grew up spending summers at this family cottage. Although they raised their children in Cincinnati, Bill and Rat made sure that their children also grew up on the lake, teaching them boating skills and making sure they had plenty of summer activities. Rat would take the children to Omena for most of each summer, barely returning home in enough time to get school supplies and start school in the fall. Bill came up on the weekends and delighted his children with blueberry pancakes and sausage breakfasts every Sunday morning.

When Bill was a child during WWII, while his father was serving as a doctor in the Navy on Tinian and Guam, Bill contracted polio and convalesced in the Omena cottage with his mother, Marjorie and sister, Holly. When his father returned from the war, he did not recognize his wife at the train station into which he arrived, as her hair had turned white while he was away. Certainly caring for two children on her own (and one with polio) was enough stress during the war to turn anyone's hair white!

After attending Howe Military School as a middle-schooler, Bill graduated from Wyoming High School in 1952. He received his BA in Industrial Engineering from University of Alabama in 1956, and worked in chemical engineering for most of his career.

Although the symptoms of polio subsided while he was an adult, they returned when he got older and he faced post-polio syndrome, which made walking painful. He would tell everyone that he was perfectly healthy except that it hurt him to walk. He was a board member and active in the Cincinnati Polio Connection in his later years.

Bill was a boat lover, owning everything from a small runabout to a Chris Craft cabin cruiser. He loved being out on the water. Even in his later years when walking was difficult, his son made sure he got out on the water for a trip around Grand Traverse Bay. Bill and son Bill loved to work on boats together as well as feel the wind through their hair on rides all over.

Bill also loved motor vehicles. He could name any car on the road by year, make, model and engine. Watching TV or a movie with him could easily elicit a comment from him noting that the dubbed in sound of an engine was not properly matched to the vehicle on the screen. He taught his children and grandchildren to drive and each of them became "road warriors", easily driving the 500 miles from home in Cincinnati to the cottage in Michigan in record times. He was an active member of the Mercedes Benz Club of Cincinnati, and later found a love of Jaguars, an obsession he shared with his daughter.

Bill's son Andrew Renz predeceased him in 2004. He and Rat have 5 grandchildren (Emma [Lane] Elliott, Eleanor First, Meredith Renz, Griffin Renz and Crystal Renz), and two great-grandchildren, Audrey (6) and Blair (3). Bill, Andrew, and Cynthia. They and Bill's children, Bill and Cynthia, along with the rest of the Omena community will miss Bill's booming laugh and generous heart. Bill Andrew Renz died on March 31st in Cincinnati Ohio.

Thomas Justin Memorial Funeral Homes,



Jon Frderick Smith  
August 9, 1942 - July 12, 2023

Jon Frderick Smith was born on August 9th, 1943, in Traverse City, the son of Geneva (Putnam) and Clifford Smith. John had one younger brother, Brent, and the four called Omena, Michigan, their home. Jon's family has lived in Omena since 1876.

Jon added a touch of spice, mischief, and big-heartedness into every life he encountered. As a child, he enjoyed getting into mischief with his friends and his brother Brent, as well as fishing, and playing sports. While attending Northport High School, Jon met the first love of his life, Alice Mae Middleton. Jon was a basketball player and Alice was a cheerleader.

Jon and Alice were wed on May 18th, 1963, at the ages of 19 (Jon) and 17 (Alice). They lived in in Northport, and later, Suttons Bay. They welcomed their first daughter Tammy into the world who sadly passed away at birth. Within the next four years, they had two more children: Sheila, and Clifford (Chip). Jon and Alice attended Chip and Sheila's high school sports and performance events. After the children graduated, Jon could still be found attending high school sports events.

Shortly after high school Jon found his lifelong passion in barbering. In 1965, Jon started his barbershop in the heart of Suttons Bay. Many friendly faces walked through his doors and he would greet everybody by name without missing a beat. Friends and family fondly remember the earlier days of the backroom of the barbershop as a place for playing cards. Later, the card area transitioned to pool tables, pinball machines, quarter-operated video games, and a classic glass-bottle pop machine. Wanting to merge his career in barbering and his passion for hunting and fishing, Jon made his barbershop a haven for sportsmen. At Jon's Barbershop you could find fish and game licenses, lures, and bait or ammunition. In the old days, Jon's Barbershop on Main

Street was such a popular spot to get a free cup of coffee and read the paper that potential patrons were daunted by the crowd that seemed to wait inside to get their hair and beards trimmed. Some coffee drinkers might find a wiggler at the bottom of their cup, courtesy of Jon's good humor and access to fishing bait. In 1995, Jon moved his operation from Main Street to West Madison Street. Jon's Barbershop was a Leelanau County tradition for the young ones to get their first haircut.

Even after retiring at the age of 69, Jon could still be found in downtown Suttons Bay every day picking up the mail and dropping in on his son Chip and the other barbers at the shop where he would sweep the floor. John and Alice had many adventures on Suttons Bay in their boat, cruises off the Florida coast, and exotic vacations as far as Costa Rica after retirement. Jon and his family and friends were heartbroken when Alice passed away on November 29th, 1999 after 36 years of marriage.

Jon knew the second love of his life, Janet Alpers, for many years. Jon and Janet were best friends, travel buddies, and companions for the last 23 years of his life. They lived in Suttons Bay, where Jon loved to sit on the beach, captain his ship, the "Jus' One More", and document the weather. They had a close group of friends they regularly spent time with and cheered for MSU with. Jon and Jan were regular attendees at local high school sporting events, and they loved their lovable but spoiled Westie named Buddy.

Jon was active in the community as a member of the Masons, Shriners, Royal Order of Jesters, and the Leelanau County Prospectors Club. He also was a high school basketball referee in his earlier years, and always a hopeful Detroit Lions fan. He loved to drive his 1959 red MG convertible in the summer, change his voicemail most days to reflect the local weather report, and read the local newspapers. Jon was an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed snowmobiling, hunting, and fishing.

Jon Frederick Smith passed away on July 12th, 2023. Shortly before his passing, his son Chip loaned Omena Historical Society some of Jon's fishing rods and other memorabilia for their Fish & Trips exhibit. Jon was a Lifetime Member of the OHS and a faithful annual Museum Caretaker donor. If Jon could say one last thing he'd probably comment on the weather, smile beneath the curled edges of his legendary handlebar mustache, and say, "Ciao, for now."

legacy.com, Omena Historical Society



Betty A Graves Wheeler  
January 30, 1932 - February 6, 2023

Betty Graves Wheeler was born January 30, 1932 in Chicago, IL the daughter of Fred and Geneva (Gibbons) Graves. She had three siblings: Margie Neese, Mary Moscato and Fred Graves.

On July 29, 1950 in Chicago she married Herbert "Bert" J. Wheeler. During their 70 years of marriage, they had three children: Sue Moore, Jan Nyland, and Bob Wheeler. She was kind, loving, giving, and above all fair in raising their three children. As the family grew, she had ten grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren. Betty was always sewing or crocheting something for family and friends. There was always an outfit, baby blanket, Afghan and of course, Christmas stockings for all.

Bert did many jobs over the years. He spent his younger years working as a machinist in Des Plaines, Illinois, but Bert had a long association with Omena through his father, Eugene Wheeler, his great-uncle Leonard H. and his grandfather, C.E. Wheeler who ran Sunset Lodge in Omena together for nearly half a century. In 1972, when Ernie Barth decided to sell his store in Omena, Bert and Betty moved to Omena, took over the store, and renamed it "Berts Country Store". While they enjoyed year around life in Omena, they found the pace of owning the store in Omena exhausting. After six years Bert and Bette decided to sell the store but, but they remained in Omena for the next 40 years.

Betty was a long-time bowler, enjoyed bingo, and cards, and always said her favorite entertainment was the casino, where she was quite lucky. She remained a presence in Omena for the rest of her life.

Betty Ann Wheeler, 91 passed away on Monday, February 6, 2023 at Silver Lake Serenity AFC.

Leelanau Enterprise, "Omena, a Place in Time" by Amanda Holmes

