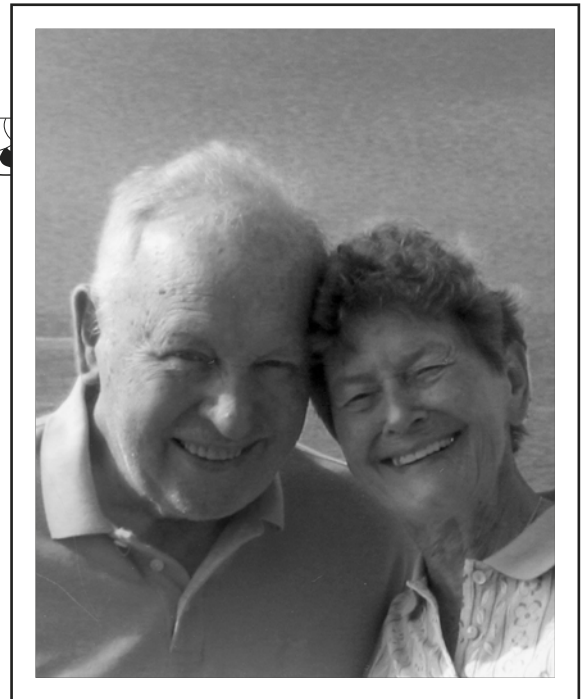




2009

Kenneth E. Knudsen and Jeanie (Kishefsky) Knudsen



Ken and Jeanie Knudsen have lived a humble life of quiet acts of kindness and generous giving without fanfare. Their success in life was built on faith, integrity, and working hard by following Christian principles. By their example, they have shown their eight children, grandchildren, and hundreds of area youth, how to find their way in a complicated world.

Jeanie, a lifetime member of St. Francis Church, graduated from St. Francis High School in 1946. Through Sodality, she acquired a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. In later years, with arthritic hands, Jeanie made rosaries to send to the poor overseas. Jeanie was an enthusiastic high school cheerleader for the basketball team. She continued this energy for later generations of Knudsens and their teammates who participated in Gladiator sports.

Born in Leland, Ken was an outstanding center on the 1942 Class D State Championship team. After graduation in 1942, Ken joined the Navy and served in the Pacific in WWII.

Ken converted to the Catholic faith and in 1947 began a 62 year marriage with Jeanie. Blessed with many joys in family life, they also shared setbacks, hardships, and heartaches. Through it all, they continued to let the light of their faith lead and guide them.

In parish life, Jeanie has been a Eucharistic minister to nursing homes, hospitals, and the homebound. Not only is she Christ-bearer, she touches their day with her gregarious smile and sweetness of heart. Ken was one of Father Kohler's first lectors after Vatican II. Ken and Jeanie have read the word of the Lord side by side for over thirty years.

As with most St. Francis families, their non-working hours were spent volunteering for the church and school. Jeanie was an active member of the Altar Society and PTA, lending her talents for the bake sales, carnivals, bazaars, and dinners. The Knudsens could always be counted on to attend and help at any event or fundraiser.

Ken was an important part of the first Catholic Athletic Association and later, the St. Francis Boosters. Besides driving the school buses to athletic events, Ken maintained them without cost to the school. He eventually was instrumental in purchasing a new athletic bus for GTACS. When Ken volunteered as a coach for 8th grade basketball, the opposing coaches witnessed him as a true gentleman who taught the student athletes Christian values while having fun with sports. They tried to emulate Ken's example.

With faith in God, Ken and Jeanie ventured into their own waste management company, KPS. The business grew from Ken and a truck and Jeanie doing the accounting, into one of the largest and most respected companies in the area. With his ethics and knowledge, Ken was asked to serve on the Grand Traverse County Solid Waste Council. Area leaders consulted him in developing a master waste removal plan for the growing community.

Through their generosity and loving hearts, Ken and Jeanie have held true to the teaching that "one should give back to the Lord for all He has given to us."