

Franklin Pierce Corley

(July 17, 1936 - November 18, 2014)

Franklin Pierce Corley, 78, was called to his own recliner to eternal rest and to watch life on the sidelines, with the angels and go fishing with his youngest daughter, Daniela, on November 18, 2014.



Frank was born on July 17, 1936 in a little town called Philippi, West Virginia, to Thomas Noah Corley and Margaret Lee (Munson) Corley. As his parents divorced when he was quite young, he went to live with, and was raised by, his grandmother, Belle (Krumbeigle) Munson, a strong woman who instilled in young Frank right vs. wrong. He grew up during the latter years of the Depression and during World War II. Times were not easy for young Franklin. If it weren't for his Aunt Sybil, Frank wouldn't have had shoes or a coat to wear to school during the winter. Many times, if he didn't catch fish or bring in a deer from a hunt, the family went hungry. Frank loved to fish and hunt. Frank knew the value of a hard day's work.

Frank was a graduate of Coalton High School, Coalton, WV. He was also a graduate of several Army and Air Force technical schools. As he approached manhood, he knew he did not want to work in the coal mines. Instead, he joined the Army, completing basic combat training in November of 1956. As luck would have it, he was eventually sent to West Germany where he met a lovely fraulein, Bernhild T. Gest, whom he somehow convinced to marry him, though he did not know a lick of German, and she didn't know a lick of English. They obviously figured it out! It is said, however, that Frank revered his mother-in-law, Anni Brey. Frank and Bernhild married on November 5, 1959, in West Virginia.

There began the odyssey of Frank and Bernhild. Frank and Bernhild brought five children into the world. Krimhild, 54, who lives in Montana, gave them six grandchildren (Cletus Knowles, III, Athesia Lassel, Pierce Knowles, Daniela Watkins, Marcus Carter, & Jaren Labbe). Franklin Johan, the second born, predeceased him.

Maximilian, 49, came next. Anna, 48, is a retired lieutenant colonel, currently residing in Texas. Daniela, the baby, was wrenched from the family in 1981 when she was hit by a truck while waiting for the school bus. Franklin's heart, and his mind, never fully recovered from this tragedy. Frank is also survived by cousins Arnett Brown Corley, Jr, of Elkins, WV, Mary Jo Jones, Charleston, WV, Michael T. Corley, Charleston, WV, Craig Corley, Lewistown, VA, and Kathryn Joann Nee (Corley), of Pittsburgh, PA. He is also survived by a brother-in-law, Eberhard Gest, France, and his family.

Those who knew Franklin may, or may not, know that he was a bit of a "bad ass." He followed in his ancestors' footsteps and answered the call from the nation on more than one occasion. Several times, he went to Vietnam and served this nation proudly, instilling in his progeny Duty, Honor, and Country. He never went for the 'medals,' he went for the mission. This includes actions taken during not one, not two, but THREE deployments to Vietnam and the surrounding area. Something else he instilled in his progeny—he always stood out in his assignments and always stood up for his troops and airmen. Each time he came home with orders for a new assignment, Bernhild dutifully followed along to the next duty station. MSgt Corley was awarded many commendations during his service in both the Army and the Air Force (he transferred from the Army to the Air Force after about 10 years). He retired from the Air Force in 1981 after serving over 25 years.

Bernhild finally put her foot down in 1979, when they arrived in Michigan. She didn't want to move anymore. They bought a house, and Dad bought a restaurant, "Corley's Thumb Restaurant." It kept Frank busy over the years. So many people in Port Austin foretold his "Going Out of Business," year after year after year. He stayed in business for over 30 years. Kids loved to go to Frank's. Frank loved kids. He would make special hot cakes for them...bunnies, Mickey Mouse...who can forget "The Round Table," where all of the world's problems were discussed, and usually fixed, by the town's elders and Frank...who had an opinion on everything. During this time, with all of the "birds out of the nest," Frank would close the restaurant in October and take Bernhild, in their RV, to West Virginia for some R & R. The Alpine Campground, near Elkins, was their "stop" to relax for a while, and for Dad to catch up with relatives and maybe get some fishing in.

Frank and Bernhild were known to help those in need. Whether it was food for a family struggling, or taking in someone who didn't have a place to live, Frank and Bernhild were always a shelter for those in a storm. Frank didn't believe in tooting his horn about this, as he

believed in “do not let your right hand tell your left hand what it is doing.”

In the later years, we saw he was getting tired. Bernhild knew it was time to close the restaurant. They sold it in 2012.

Little Frank genealogy trivia for you: Frank did not know his father very well. Interesting to note, he ran his restaurant EXACTLY the way his father did...right down to the way he dressed, according to Franklin’s step-brother, Ed. In later years, Frank was very interested in all of the genealogical information his daughter, Anna, had relayed to him, including the family’s roots and service since the beginning of the nation’s life. Frank knew little about his family, on either side, so he enjoyed this a great deal.

Frank had been a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

His granddaughter, Daniela Watkins, along with her husband, Adam and daughters (Emily, Joselyn, and Maygen) took extraordinary care of him in his final days. Many thanks go out to Sanilac Medical Care, for their tenderness with my father.

So, finally, Franklin gets to go home and see his daughter, son, parents and grandparents. We know St. Peter will let him in, after Frank tells him a few jokes. Daniela, his youngest daughter, will take him by the hand and lead him into the gates of heaven. There will be a fishing pole waiting for him. They’ll go fishing for crappie once again.

Visitation will be Saturday, November 22, 2014 from 3 to 8 pm at the MacAlpine Funeral Home – Gage Chapel in Kinde.

Burial will be in the Hazelwood Cemetery, Beverly, West Virginia.

“Take Me Home, Country Roads.”