

## **Coaster, Francis S.**

Mr. Francis Stephen Coaster, also known as: Dear, Sweetie, Dad, Pop, Grandpa, Unc, Clem, Mr. Francis, 88, of Ubly, passed away Monday, September 6, 2004, at his residence under hospice care. Though he spent most of his life in "The Thumb," Francis was born on Russell Street on Flag Day, June 14, 1916, in Detroit. His parents were Benjamin (later known as "The Barn Builder of the Thumb") and Agnes (Karchnia) Coaster. Francis was forced to leave school early to help support his family. He began working with his father in constructing barns in the Thumb Area. After a few years, at the age of 19, he began what was to become a 42-year career with the C.A. Hull Company, a highway bridge construction firm. In 1942, Francis joined the Army Air Corp. Though trained as an aircraft mechanic, after demonstrating his skill in carpentry to his company commander, he served as a carpenter with the 355th Fighter Group throughout England, France, and Germany. Upon his return from the war, Francis again began working with C.A. Hull Company. Soon after, his sister-in-law, Gladys, recommended he meet a sweet "Rosie the Riveter," also known as Evelyn Williams, who was working at the Briggs Connor Plant, on ailerons for the B-17 bomber. Francis lost his heart at first sight of this transplanted farm girl, the daughter of Guy and Lettie Williams of Farmer, Ohio, and determined that she would be the love of his life, and she truly was. A scant and romantic three months later the two were married on February 16, 1946 at Our Lady of La Salette Catholic Church in Berkley. During the first six years of marriage, they would travel and live throughout the state at the various Hull worksites. This characteristic love of work and family, together with an innate talent and an endless curiosity, helped Francis move into various supervisory and management positions with Hull. Probably the most recognizable of his many road projects is the Zilwaukee Bridge on I-75, which the Hull team "Rescued" and completed after a troubled beginning by another firm. This project was also one of the few that was close enough to Francis and Evelyn's new base of operations, Ubly, for him to commute on a daily basis. For when their first born, William, was old enough to begin school, the family had located permanently in Ubly; moving into the house that he and his father had built together some years earlier. He never moved and even after his children moved away, he followed the fortunes of Ubly athletics and enjoyed all the children in the neighborhood stopping by to say hi to Mr. Francis. Family was everything to Francis and he and Evelyn worked diligently to provide a loving home, a college education, and a never-ending environment of support to his family. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than to be at a family gathering, be it a Sunday morning breakfast, a graduation party, or even watching his "luckless" Lions with the boys. Everyone who knew Francis could describe him as a truly "Christian Man," bringing love and honor to his marriage, his family, his work, his town, and his church. He loved St. John's Catholic Church in Ubly and was an ever-faithful attendee throughout his life. Francis was a familiar sight in his retirement years taking his daily walk to the post office and then later in the day around the town. He liked to walk "at least a section" a day and did so until August 4, 2004, when his more than 15-year battle with cancer forced him to the sidelines. He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Evelyn, of Ubly; two sons, William Coaster and his wife, Ella, of Central Lake, Richard Coaster and his wife, Sherrie, of Armada; one daughter, Christine Lehman and her husband, Terry, of Bloomfield Hills; grandchildren, Andrea and Bill McDonald, Brent and Janine Coaster, Julie and Scott Papineau, Jennifer McDowell, Guy Coaster, Chelsie Coaster, Jay Coaster, Adam Coaster Novack, Robert Lehman, Jeffers Lehman and his wife, Laurel Humphreys; great-grandchildren, Trevor and Grant Papineau, Zachary Mueller, Ava and Briton Coaster; sister-in-law, Rita Coaster; brothers-in-law, Oliver Goetze and Orville Gecowets; and many nieces and nephews. Preceding Francis to Heaven were two sisters, Theresa Kavanaugh and Mary Goetze; five brothers, Ben, John, Martin, and two infant brothers who died at birth. The funeral Mass will be at 11 a.m. on Friday, September 10, 2004, at St. John Catholic Church in Ubly. The Rev. Patrick O'Connor, pastor of St. Stephen Catholic Church in Saginaw, will officiate. Burial will be in the church cemetery with military honors. Visitation will be from 1 to 9 p.m. on Thursday and from 9 to 10 a.m. on Friday at the Zinger-Smigielski Funeral Home in Ubly. There

will be a parish vigil service at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday at the funeral home. Quiet, humble, kind, honest, helpful, beloved, are not always the words used to describe great men, but they are, without question, the right words to describe this great man, Francis Stephen Coaster.