



## Freeland "Fred" Ernest Merchant

January 25, 1927 - November 10, 2018

Freeland "Fred" Ernest Merchant, 91, passed away Saturday, November 10, 2018 at Kalkaska Memorial's Eden Center following a lengthy battle with schizophrenia, vascular dementia, and throat cancer.

Attending and ministering to his every need were his wonderfully compassionate caregivers who provided much comfort all his days at the center, and in particular at the time of his passing. We can never praise them enough for their excellent and loving care of Freddie, as they affectionately called him. Indeed, he himself, on that final day, took each of their hands in love to offer his appreciation and gratitude for their kindheartedness despite his thorny nature, extending his deepest heartfelt apology for such testiness. Thank you to the Eden Center as well as to all who were involved with Fred along the way for your perseverance and attentiveness to his security and wellbeing. There have been so many "you know who you are" and we are so grateful to each and every one of you. And in the end, so was Fred.

Also at his bedside in those final hours were his niece and nephew, Julie Lattimer and Donald L. Merchant, Sr. from Cadillac, a.k.a. his "cousin and her husband". Each time he made such introduction, we tenderly smiled, knowing in his own way he still knew us, and we were blessed with an enduring memory to treasure.

Freeland, the youngest of four boys, was born January 25, 1927 in Otsego, MI to Mary Lovise (Cline) and Freeland Theodore Hyson Merchant. The family moved to Albuquerque, N.M. for the health of their father whose lungs and eyes were burned with mustard gas in WWI. They lived for a time in Lucas, MI before finally settling in Cadillac, MI. Their father's injuries made regular employment difficult, so the boys hunted, fished, and worked on farms, making their own way however they could to help the family survive.

Freeland joined the Navy during WWII and served in the Pacific Theater on LST ships. Two of the ships he was serving on were sunk by torpedoes, but Fred was washed up on shore without serious injury in each incident. Following the Navy, he also served a short time in the Army.

For many years, he traipsed around the country seeking fun and fortune. Not having much schooling, he worked in silver and gold mines, as a cook on oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, in construction, and at restaurants, along with a variety of other jobs. Finally, in the 1970's, he made his way back to Cadillac with nothing more than fantastical stories, but found fun playing Penny Ante with his brother and working the slot machines at the casinos. He also liked the lottery and frequented local restaurants, bantering with the waitresses while enjoying a meal and coffee. In years past, many a night he could be found fishing bullheads from the city dock in Cadillac.

Despite his cantankerousness, Fred really did love people, gifting everyone whenever and whatever he could, whether or not he was truly able. He loved animals as well and was known to take in every dog and cat that came to his door.

He is survived by a son, Dennis (Linda) Merchant, 6 grandchildren, 15 great grandchildren. Sister-in-law, Geri Merchant of Manton also survives. In

addition to Julie and Don and his family, are other surviving nephews Ronald Merchant of Cadillac and his family, John (Lori) Kangas of Manton and their family, and nieces Penny (Bill) Oram of Manton and their family, Theresa (Bill) Snyder of Ewart, and his dearly-loved 16-year old cat, Lunker.

He was preceded in death by a son, Jerry Lee Merchant, his parents, and brothers Merle Bernard (Ellen), Douglas Earl, and Cletus James (Hazel). Also predeceasing him was his sister-in-law Ruth Merchant; nephews, Marty Kangas and Keith (Gale) Merchant, niece Toni Merchant Langworthy.

There will be a visitation for family and friends to honor Fred's life on Thursday, November 15, 2018 from 5 to 7 p.m. at Peterson Funeral and Cremation Services in Cadillac.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Wonderland Humane Society in Cadillac or to Animal Advocates of Wexford County. An online guestbook is available at [www.petersonfh.com](http://www.petersonfh.com).

# Tribute Wall

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“ So sorry for your loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

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**Melody Stevens** - November 15, 2018 at 03:20 PM

KG

“ I helped Freeland at the bank for many years and I LOVED him dearly. He was the sweetest man and SO funny. His obituary was beautifully wrote and so interesting. I'll never forget him and his many cats. Much love to his family, Freeland was one of a kind.

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**Krista Gallop** - November 14, 2018 at 08:12 PM