



Michael Lewis Oatley

February 25, 1943 - February 14, 2024

Michael (Mike) Lewis Oatley passed away on February 14, 2024 at the age of 80, surrounded by his family. Mike was born on February 25, 1943 in Dearborn, Michigan to Herb and Esther Oatley. He grew up in St. Johns, Michigan and was a three sport athlete at St. Johns High School, graduating in 1961. He attended Western Michigan University on an athletic scholarship, participating in track and football. He earned his bachelor's degree in 1965 and later acquired a master's degree from Northern Illinois University. In 1973, he accepted a teaching and coaching position at Cadillac High School, and he retired from CAPS in 1998.

As a counselor, teacher and coach, Mike touched many lives, offering guidance and support unique to each individual and situation. His passion for sports led him to coach football, basketball and track for over 30 years. Many of his former players maintained lasting connections with him which brought him great joy.

His journey took a beautiful turn when he married Joyce VanderPol on May 7, 1983. For over 40 years, their relationship evolved into a testament of love and a profound connection centered around family. Mike and Joyce shared a love of books, music, exercise, the outdoors, their cabin, and their church. Family gatherings were filled with holiday cheer, sledding, games, and heartfelt talks around the kitchen table.

Mike's sense of humor served as a tool to connect with others. He was a storyteller, embellishing his stories through self-deprecating humor and sarcasm. His warrior spirit, evident in his relentless battle against heart disease for over 40 years, extended beyond health challenges. He approached the sports arena with that same warrior's mentality, leading his teams with intensity and determination.

Mike's unwavering love and guidance as a father left an indelible mark on the hearts of his children, shaping their lives with enduring warmth and wisdom. As a grandfather, he embraced his role with enthusiasm, investing heavily in the lives and interests of his grandchildren. Mike leaves behind a legacy of love, laughter, and inspiration. While we mourn his passing, we also celebrate the extraordinary life of a man who lived with purpose, passion, and an enduring spirit of kindness.

In addition to his wife, Joyce, survivors include his children: Todd (Amy) Oatley, Christine (Dan) Maldonado, and grandchildren: Alex Maldonado, Maria Maldonado, Joseph Maldonado, Nicholas Oatley, Nathan Oatley, Madeline Oatley, his brother: Dave (Eileen) Oatley, and beloved nieces and nephews.

Mike was preceded in death by his parents (Herb and Esther Oatley), in-laws (Don and Irene VanderPol), daughter-in-law (Carrie Oatley), sister-in-law (Gayla Finstrom), and nephew (Chad Finstrom).

Visitation will be held at Peterson Funeral and Cremation Services in Cadillac, Michigan on Friday, February 23rd from 4pm-7pm. A memorial service will be held at First Congregational UCC on Saturday, February 24th at 11am. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to First Congregational UCC, 200 E. Harris St, Cadillac, MI, 49601. An online guestbook is available at www.petersonfh.c

om.

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB **23**. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Peterson Funeral and Cremation Services
205 East Cass Street
Cadillac, MI 49601

Memorial Service

FEB **24**. 11:00 AM (ET)

First Congregational UCC
200 East Harris Street
Cadillac, MI 49601

Tribute Wall

DE

“ I became an English Teacher at Madison County HS in VA last month bc Coach Oatley told me to in 1995, it took me 30 years to realize he was right. I am loving it. I used to be a scientist and science teacher. When Coach died I told my favorite principal this story and she remembered. When an English position came open at her school she asked me to apply. God works in mysterious and wonderful ways.

Desiree - September 07, 2025 at 08:04 PM

DV

“ So sorry to about Mike Oatley passed away and I didn't know that he had passed away. I was in High School when I knew him. My sympathy for his wife Joyce and his family. May he Rest in Peace



Donna M Valko - July 24, 2025 at 05:27 PM



“ My deepest condolences to the Oatley Family. I just learned of Coach Oatley’s passing. He was my football and track coach my senior year at Niles East High School(1967-68) in Skokie, Illinois. My senior year was coach’s first year at the high school. He was a tremendous influence on my life offering encouragement and instilling in me a confidence I never knew I had. I only had one year to play for Coach but can say without hesitation that he was my favorite coach and a wonderful mentor. Coach Oatley introduced me to weightlifting and continued to send me summer workouts while I played football in college. He was a great role model for me. I will remember him in my daily prayers. May he rest in peace.

George Gargano

George Gargano - May 23, 2024 at 04:59 PM



“ Mr. Oatley was a wonderful coach and a great listener to us students. He always had a smile and friendly word for you. He will be greatly missed.



Wendy Nolf - February 22, 2024 at 12:25 PM



“ Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Michael Lewis Oatley.



February 22, 2024 at 10:03 AM

KS

“ Kim and Mark Swanson planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Michael Lewis Oatley.

Kim and Mark Swanson - February 22, 2024 at 09:09 AM

KS

“ Kim and Mark Swanson purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Michael Lewis Oatley.



Kim and Mark Swanson - February 22, 2024 at 09:09 AM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Michael Lewis Oatley.



February 22, 2024 at 05:52 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Michael Lewis Oatley.



February 21, 2024 at 12:35 PM

GB

“ Gregory B. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Michael Lewis Oatley.

Gregory B. - February 21, 2024 at 12:35 PM

BZ

“ Brian Z. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Michael Lewis Oatley.

Brian Z. - February 20, 2024 at 10:53 PM



“ Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Michael Lewis Oatley.



February 19, 2024 at 10:45 AM

SH

“ Rest in Peace Mr. Oatley - thank you for all your great advice during my high school career. I was lucky to have you as my advisor. Sara Parmenter, Class of 86

Sara P Haskin - February 19, 2024 at 10:44 AM

KM

“ *Kris Malleaux lit a candle in memory of Michael Lewis Oatley*



Kris Malleaux - February 18, 2024 at 09:58 PM

KM

Mike. Was a great guy always smiling and Joyce thinking about you and sorry for your loss (rip) thinking of you Joyce 🙏

Kris Malleaux - February 18, 2024 at 10:02 PM

MM

“ *Mike, rest in peace my friend and former mentor (in later years.. I realized). You did your absolute best to start me in the right direction when it mattered the most. Love you and Joyce.*

Mark E. Malleaux - February 18, 2024 at 01:35 PM

JS

“ *Jackie S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Michael Lewis Oatley.*

Jackie S. - February 18, 2024 at 04:10 AM

GP

“ My memories of my friend Mike go back to elementary school, to Little League when he got his Harvey Kuehn baseball glove, to when he set the record in the shot put for the high school track team, when he played trombone in the high school dance band, when he invited me to be his "little brother" at Western Michigan University, and then asked me to be his roommate for the next two years of our lives (our room on the 4th floor of Bigelow Hall was the center of many late night activities that were not appreciated by the other rooms that lived below us) and finally, our late in life conversations about living life. He was a fine, kind human being; a truly wonderful person!

Greg Penix

Greg Penix - February 17, 2024 at 12:54 PM

BS

“ I always enjoyed Mike's sense of humor, laden with self-deprecation and sarcasm. He was a treat to encounter and could pop up anywhere. At the same time he was very caring and always there to support those in need. Goatley, I'm glad that you were part of my life and I will miss you.

Bob Stuber

Bob Stuber - February 17, 2024 at 12:25 PM

CM

“ Mr. Oatley as I knew him as a High School student was my hero and savior. I owe my life to him and would not be here today if it had not been for his care and concern for his students, as we were called. He was there when I needed help the most. I thanked you then and I say thank you again for caring for me and saving my life. You was a very special friend to me. You will be greatly missed by all who knew you and we will see you again in Heaven, RIP my good friend.



Cheryl (Yager) Mapes - February 17, 2024 at 09:31 AM

NN

“ Mike, thanks for all the help you gave me in my times of stress, your advice always rang true. You were a gentleman and a great teacher. I think of all the young folks you helped along their way to being a responsible adult, that took a level of skill beyond my meagre abilities. Rest in peace my good friend.
Nick Nelson

Nicholas Nelson - February 16, 2024 at 04:06 PM

PJ

I was a Manager for Mike for JV Football and JV Basketball. Mike was always a consummate professional as well as a fierce competitor. Mike and I would sit and talk in his office on my off hours. He was a great counselor to me and anyone who sought support and encouragement.
Paul Janik

Paul Janik - February 16, 2024 at 07:14 PM

MS

Mike was a mentor for me as I began my career in education 40+ years ago. He became a true friend at a time where I was in need of advice and counsel. He was always very funny and a joy to be around.

My condolences go out to Joyce, who was also a great friend and to Todd and Christine and their families.

Mark Swanson

Mark Swanson - February 19, 2024 at 09:16 AM

TU

“ *The Nursing Leadership team at UMH-West planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Michael Lewis Oatley.*

The Nursing Leadership team at UMH-West - February 16, 2024 at 02:25 PM



“ *Your Light Shines was purchased for the family of Michael Lewis Oatley.*



February 16, 2024 at 02:25 PM

TO

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Todd Oatley - February 16, 2024 at 02:18 PM