



## Norman Joseph "Joe" Leo

May 12, 1941 - October 23, 2020

Norman Joseph "Joe" Leo, age 79, of Grand Rapids MI began his journey to his Creator on Friday October 23, 2020. A member of The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, Joe was born in Harbor Springs, Michigan on May 12, 1941. He was the youngest boy of eight children born to Sampson and Cecilia Leo. He would share the same birthday as his mother; to which his father would jokingly tease her by saying, "Don't say I never got you anything nice for your birthday!". Early in Joe's life his family moved downstate to Grand Rapids.

He attended both grade and middle school at St. Alphonsus in Grand Rapids. He graduated from Grand Rapids Catholic Central High School and served in the United States Army in the early 1960's. After his father passed in 1965, he spent 27 years taking loving care of his mother until her passing in 1992.

Joe worked at G & T Industries with his brother Sam before he decided to further his education. He enrolled at Grand Valley State University and earned his B.A. in Elementary Education. He went on to teach the 5th grade at Harrison Elementary School.

A fellow teacher at Harrison Elementary remembers that he was "the favorite teacher in the building". Joe inspired his students to do their best, and he would reward them in many different ways for their efforts. He was a firm believer in a College Education. It made him both happy and proud to hear about his many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews efforts and accomplishments.

After Joe stopped teaching he went on to work with Fran Compo at the office of The Grand River Band of Ottawa Indians. He helped her coordinate the annual Three Fires Pow Wow in Grand Rapids as well as other social events the tribe held. This was the last job he worked until he was able to retire.

Joe was an avid sports lover his entire life. There were many a neighborhood softball game with his siblings and childhood friends growing up; these have become legendary

stories for the Leo Family. He enjoyed bowling, golf, and playing softball on St. Al's 35 and older team as an adult.

Not only did he play sports, but he coached them as well. He coached his sisters, nieces, cousins, and many friends on an all American Indian Softball Team back in the day. There are many fond memories of this time for those who were there playing or watching. He also coached basketball at Harrison Elementary while he taught there.

Joe enjoyed watching sports too. He loved his Tiger Baseball, Lions Football, and University of Michigan Football and Basketball Teams. On game days he loved to blast his U of M Marching Band Album. One of his favorite places to catch a game was Woody's Press Box in Wyoming where he became a regular customer.

A favorite pastime for Joe was playing bingo at many of the local parishes and halls. He made many good friends there over the years. He enjoyed taking the bus to area casinos to play bingo and the slot machines. His secret, he told us, was to play the max amount and don't waste time playing one or two coins.

Our Joe will be forever remembered as the best son, brother, father figure and uncle a family could be blessed with. He was a very generous, friendly, outgoing, loving soul who put out so much good in the world. Joe's sense of humor combined with his smile and positive outlook made him very approachable and likeable. To know him was to love him. A testament to this is the number of friends he has held dear throughout his life. No matter where he went it seemed like he always knew someone.

Joe was preceded in death by his parents Sampson and Cecilia Leo; siblings: Robert Leo, Gloria Chisholm, Richard L. Leo, Samuel J. Leo, Ruth Eagleman, Margaret Pontiac; nephew Richard Leo, niece Theresa Leo, and great-nephew Richard RedBow.

Joe is survived by his sister Rosalee "Rose" Starchief; niece and "daughter" Karen (Pete) Schaab and their children: Celia, Jackson, Ava, and Sampson Joseph; Brother-in-law Johny Chisholm; close nieces: Sheree Gamble and Dawn Thorpe; the families of Leo, Chisholm, Eagleman and Pontiac plus several generations of nieces and nephews who will deeply miss his love and wisdom, and good friends Dave Wills and Sally McWilliams.

A Memorial Mass will be celebrated Friday November 6, 2020 11:00 am at St. Alphonsus Church. Interment Holy Childhood of Jesus Cemetery Harbor Springs MI. His family will receive visitors Thursday from 5-8 pm at the Arsulowicz Brothers East Mortuary, 937 Michigan St NE and Friday from 10-11 am at church. The family would like to extend our

gratitude to the entire staff at Bloom Credit Union on Plainfield Ave in Grand Rapids. The kindness and concern they have shown to Joe over the years means the world to us. Also, we want to thank the staff at Woody's Press Box in Wyoming for providing him with great service and making him feel welcome there.

# Cemetery

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## Holy Childhood of Jesus Cemetery

7600 Lightfoot Rd.  
Harbor Springs, MI, 49740

# Events

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**NOV 5** **Visitation** 05:00PM - 08:00PM

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East  
937 Michigan Ave NE, Grand Rapids, MI, US,  
49503

**NOV 6** **Visitation** 10:00AM - 11:00AM

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St. Alphonsus  
224 Carrier St NE, Grand Rapids, MI, US,  
49505

**NOV 6** **Memorial Mass** 11:00AM

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St. Alphonsus  
224 Carrier St NE, Grand Rapids, MI, US,  
49505

# Comments

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“ Chuck Zarzecki. Joe would call me Charley Horse. We played a lot of golf back in the 70's with his brother Sam.

**Chuck Zarzecki** - November 06, 2020 at 12:52 PM

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“ Ian & Delbert Chisholm purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Norman Joseph "Joe" Leo.



**Ian & Delbert Chisholm** - November 02, 2020 at 02:33 PM

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“ My name is Nancy a Rapid bus driver. Joe rode my bus route 10 to meijer and woody press box.  
He always gave me chocolate candy bars when he would get off the bus.  
I will miss his smile and kindness.  
RIP Joe

**Nancy Slater** - October 31, 2020 at 03:15 PM



“ Hi I am Tammie, Joe rode the 11 with me when I first started 14 years ago. Pamapii my friend til we meet again

**Tammie** - October 31, 2020 at 05:16 PM



“ Thank you both Nancy and Tammie. Your kind words mean so much right now. He knew good people when he met them. He would tell me of the kindness his regular bus drivers had shown him. I was hoping that you were aware of his passing. He will be greatly missed. From his niece, Karen Schaab.

**Karen Schaab** - October 31, 2020 at 05:58 PM



“ Last Saturday I missed not having Joe on the bus. My heart aches with Joe's passing. He always put a smile on my face and handing me candy bars as he called me "Kenmore... I mean Kendra" Joe would say as he got off the bus. I miss his stories of his life experiences. Joe has touched the lives of many, a true blessing to have known him.

**Kendra Tjemmes** - October 31, 2020 at 06:36 PM



“ I also am one of Joe's bus drivers and also considered him a friend. Joe played bingo with my Dad, always sharing fun stories. Joe was known by drivers as the candy man, but we would bring each other fruit & nuts. I also will miss him dearly ! & To all his family

**Sally Music** - October 31, 2020 at 07:21 PM



“ Kendra and Sally, thank you both for sharing your memories of Joe. It sounds like you got to know the true nature of his personality. His witty nature and his kind and thoughtful soul. I know there were many bus drivers he held dear. I like the Candy Man name, that is great. We appreciate your friendship with him and your condolences. From his niece Karen.

**Karen Schaab** - October 31, 2020 at 08:08 PM



“ Joe worked with me at the North American Indian Center in the late 1990s. I always appreciated his care for his family, his quick grasp of Indian humor, his genuine love of the local Native community, and his insights to life he shared with me. I was saddened when I read about his passing. My condolences to his family. You will be in my prayers.

**Levi Rickert** - October 31, 2020 at 09:19 PM



“ I too am a bus driver . I believe that Joe rode my bus alot on the route 11 where he would travel to get a morning coffee. Joe called me Maggie May and sweetened my day with chocolate too, as he taught me about all things native american. I really appreciate having the chance to know him. He will be missed

**Maggie** - October 31, 2020 at 09:24 PM



“ I am one of Joe bus driver on the route 11 and route 10 also a partner at the Bingo hall ( Britney hall) always made my day just to see him had jokes and candy's to make your day. You will ve missed Big Joe.. RIP

**Louralee** - October 31, 2020 at 10:41 PM



“ My name is Joanne and have had the pleasure of meeting and getting to know Joe, my buddy. You have know idea how much I will miss my friend, absolutely love his stories and will cherish all the little gifts and memories I have of him. Bless you all!

**joanne Bielaczyc** - October 31, 2020 at 10:46 PM



“ My deepest sympathy to Joe's family. I drive for the Rapid and he would ride with me on my Sat route like clockwork. 1st to the bank and then to breakfast and then shopping. He always called me " trouble" things would always happen on my bus it seemed and we would laugh about it. Such a fun guy. You will definately be missed. I remember one time he forgot his cane and he said aww I have to ride back with you to grab it by the stop. Made sure he got it and back on the bus we went. I wondered where he was today . So very sorry. Alyce

**Alyce Rivera** - November 01, 2020 at 03:48 AM



“ I haven't seen Joe in the past few years, but just heard during mass at st Als that he had passed. His sister Margaret was my best friend for 50+ years and I was sorry to hear this yesterday. He will be reunited with our Lord and his large family now, catching up on things! They all had a great sense of humor, and I have missed the whole family since my friend has been gone. Truly sorry for your loss. Lynda Marks

**Lynda marks** - November 02, 2020 at 12:51 PM