



DAVID SMELTZER

DAVID'S LIFE STORY



Humble, quiet, and kind, David S. Smeltzer lived a life devoted to his family. Easily contented by the simple things in life, David's greatest joy came from caring for his loved ones and playing ball. David relished the sanctuary of his home, sharing time with loved ones and playing in the yard with his grandchildren. A treasured husband, father, grandfather, son, brother, uncle, and friend, David will long be remembered and so very missed.

1955 proved a year of vibrant growth with consumerism taking off in previously unimaginable ways. With the sale of nearly 7.9 million cars, for the first time in history, seven out of ten families in the US owned an automobile, and new laws were created to require seat belts to be installed on all new cars. This was the year Ray Kroc built the first McDonald's, and TV dinners appeared, including the first fish fingers. Cans of Coca-Cola, Lego, Velcro, and The Mickey Mouse Club all made their debuts during this prosperous year. Rock and Roll music continued to grow in popularity with more idols such as Elvis Presley, Bill Haley and the Comets, Chuck Berry, and The Platters. Locally, this time of hope and prosperity grew especially bright as the Smeltzer family welcomed their son David into their hearts and home on March 27.

The second of six Smeltzer children, born in eight years, David grew up in the good company of his siblings, Laura, Gail, Larry, Jerry, and Kathy, in Comstock, Michigan. His dad worked in the paper industry, and his mom worked in a local greenhouse and was a homemaker. David grew up in a small three-bedroom home with bunk beds. David and his siblings spent most of their time playing outside with tons of friends in the neighborhood. Christmas was celebrated at his grandparents' home and built lasting memories with his aunts, uncles, and cousins.

David attended Comstock Public Schools and graduated with the class of 1973. A natural athlete, and ambidextrous, he enjoyed all sports and participated in football, basketball, baseball, and track. He could throw a ball, or bat with either hand. He received many athletic and academic awards, but he was most proud of the Outstanding Athlete Award. After high school, he continued to play baseball at Kalamazoo Valley Community College. He made it to the final cut at a AA tryout in Albuquerque, NM. After that David spent many years playing baseball, slow pitch, fastpitch, and modified softball. He could play any position on the field. His speed on the bases, strong arm, and constant talking in the field made him fun to watch.





He played well into his 50's and never played on a senior league, oftentimes playing with guys young enough to be his kids. Throughout his playing years, he was also an avid coach of many sports including rocket football, basketball, and girls softball. Though he was generally a quiet guy, he was outgoing when it came to sports.

For a time, David attended KVCC for some classes and worked at a plastics company before securing a job at Bunca Car Wash. The owner was a sports buddy of his, and when Bunca moved to Crossroads Mall, David became the manager at this store. He was good at detailing the interior (his car was always spotless), and his boss gave him many opportunities to leave and play ball.



In the summer of 1979, while at a local bar, David had the good fortune of meeting Leslie (Vliek) Sutfin, who was there with a group of girlfriends. Afterward, Leslie invited him and his friends to join the group at her place for breakfast. He accepted her offer and they reconnected again the following week. After 14 years, they made their relationship "official" and got married on October 8, 1993, in the chapel at St. Augustine. They honeymooned for a long weekend at Mackinac Island, which was a stretch for him as he was a homebody. Upon meeting, Leslie had a six-year-old daughter, Kristen. David was a constant presence in Kristen's life, always attending her sporting games and major life events. He became her second dad, but the word "step" was never muttered. They were just a family of three.

David was most content at home; when invited out, he often replied with a signature, "I don't need to go or do that." He could most likely be found at the ball field if he wasn't home. Very close to his siblings, he and his brothers enjoyed fishing in Canada for many years and hunting in Yankee Springs. David was an Ohio State University fan, enjoyed the space center, and was intrigued with the launches. He loved history and was great at drawing characters like Beetle Bailey. He had an excellent memory and could easily remember the information about most players and programs in many different sports. A big movie buff, David liked old movies. His favorite movie was "American President," and he even watched the Hallmark Channel. As with sports, David was very good at reciting what shows and movies particular actors had been in. Kristen's husband, Mike, enjoyed talking to David about their favorite show The Game of Thrones and was in awe of David's ability to know everything about every character.

In addition to tending to their home, David and Leslie enjoyed fishing in Canada together, and David also liked playing cards. He often played Cribbage and Poker with the guys. Very fast and active for his age, David liked keeping busy with yard work and spending winters in Holiday, Florida.

As a Grandpa, David was a quiet, steadfast presence, usually sitting by himself in the outfield in his red OSU chair. When his four grandkids were babies, he was usually the first to get them out of the car seat and remove their coats. He always had a basket next to the couch with chips and candy and ALWAYS had Mt. Dew in the fridge, which he shared with his grandkids. Fondly known as "Candy Grandpa," he received a large candy cane box filled with candy every Christmas from the grandkids. David always checked the calendar to see which grandkids had games and where they were. He welcomed every opportunity to play outside with the grandkids, helping in the backyard and even playing basketball in the rain.





He offered his customary matter-of-fact coaching: "Hold the bat, swing, and hit the ball" or "Stick your glove out and catch it." A natural homebody, he could never say no to his grandkids, so when his grandkids said, "Will you take us to see Mickey Mouse?" he said, "OK." It was no surprise when, after three hours at the park, he said he was done, "I've seen it all." This was totally him. Before having his own grandkids, he was often found playing with his nieces and nephews. He has even painted some fingernails.

Though our days with him were far too few, every moment spent with David was a gift we will long treasure. May we find much comfort in our many treasured memories and in carrying his legacy forward. Whenever we enjoy the comforts of home, play catch, go fishing, enjoy a movie, or share a sweet snack with a loved one, we celebrate the many ways David made life better. In this way, we keep his spirit alive and inspiring others as he so inspired us.



David Smeltzer died September 24, 2023 at his home. David was preceded in death by his father Scott and nephew Jeremy. He is survived by his mother Gloria; wife Leslie; daughter Kristen (Mike) Flores; four granddaughters: Alexandria, Elizabeth, Ryleigh, and Harper Flores; siblings: Laura (Terry) VanderMeer, Gail (Vance) Bigley, Larry (Alison) Smeltzer, Jerry (Ginger) Smeltzer and Kathy (Jeff) McDaniel; and sister-in-law, Lyle Vliek. A Life Story Celebration will be held from 2-4 PM on Sunday, October 8, at Betzler Life Story Funeral Homes, 6080 Stadium Drive, Kalamazoo (269) 375-2900. Visit David's webpage at BetzlerLifeStory.com to archive favorite memories, photos, and sign his guestbook.



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