



Willard "Bill" Koch

August 6, 1924 - December 14, 2017

Willard (Bill) M. Koch, 93, passed away December 14, 2017, at the Mid-Michigan Medical Center in Midland, Michigan. Bill was born on August 6, 1924, to Josie (Clark) Koch and Russell A. Koch in Clare, Michigan, the eighth of twelve children. He graduated from the Clare High School in 1942.

Drafted during World War II, Bill was a private first class in the 4th Armored Division, which participated in the Rhineland campaign as part of General Patton's Third Army. Bill was wounded in battle in Belgium in early January 1945 and was honorably discharged later that year.

Upon his return to Michigan, Bill worked in the Michigan oil fields, at Band Box Cleaners and at Holly Carburetors. On February 19, 1949, married Ruby (Poet) Koch.

Bill loved his hometown. During the course of their lives, Bill and Ruby owned and operated several successful businesses in Clare and Bill was keenly interested in civic affairs.

In the early 1950s, Bill took over a Standard Oil gas station on US 10 near City Hall, which he owned and operated for nearly 25 years.

In April 1965, he was elected to the Clare City Commission. In April 1966, Bill

was selected by city council members to be Mayor, a position he held until 1972. As Mayor, one of the achievements he was most proud of was being part of the City's efforts to finance and build the town's water tower, which is still in use.

His civic-mindedness was the original reason behind the reopening of the Ideal Theater four years after its original owners closed it. In 1967, Bill and Ruby and two other couples reopened the Ideal in order to provide Clare residents "with something to do." Bill and Ruby subsequently bought out the two other couples and ran the theater until 1996, when their son and daughter-in-law purchased the business.

In 1980, Bill and Ruby bought out the Gittleman's store in downtown Clare and renamed it Her Place. In 1985, they moved it to a new building at the corner of Fifth and McEwan. They operated Her Place until 2008.

Even in his retirement, Bill could still be seen driving around Clare "checking on things."

Bill loved his family. He was close with his brothers and sisters, and gave his children, granddaughter, and many nephews, nieces and grandnieces their first jobs in his various businesses.

Bill also loved golf. He played nearly all of his adult life, well into his 80s, despite having lost one of his arms to cancer in the early 1970s.

He was predeceased by his wife, Ruby, who passed away in March 2017, his parents, and all eleven of his brothers and sisters. Bill is survived by his son, Thomas (Michelle) of Clare; daughter, Amy of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida; granddaughter, Jennifer (Daniel) Donovan of Denver, Colorado; two sister-in-laws, Netty Mary Koch and Faye Poet; and a large extended family of nieces

and nephews and their children and grandchildren.

Family and friends may pay their respects to Bill at the Stephenson Wyman Funeral Home at 1005 N. McEwan Street in Clare on Friday, December 22, 2017, from 2-4 pm and 6-8 pm.

Father Peter of Our Lady of Hope Parish will officiate at the funeral service, which will be held at the Stephenson Wyman Funeral Home in Clare at 11:00 am, December 23rd, with interment at the Cherry Grove Cemetery immediately after the service. Family and friends are invited to a luncheon at the Doherty Hotel after the service.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests that donations be made to K9s for Warriors or the African Community Advancement Initiative.

Cemetery Details

Cherry Grove Cemetery

1000 Cedar St.
Clare, MI 48617

Previous Events

Visitation

DEC **22**. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Stephenson - Wyman Funeral Home (Clare)
1005 North McEwan St.
Clare, MI 48617
(989) 386-7451
wymanhf@chartermi.net
<https://www.stephenson-wyman.com/>

Visitation

DEC **22**. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Stephenson - Wyman Funeral Home (Clare)
1005 North McEwan St.
Clare, MI 48617
(989) 386-7451
wymanhf@chartermi.net
<https://www.stephenson-wyman.com/>

Service

DEC **23**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Stephenson - Wyman Funeral Home (Clare)

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Tribute Wall

ST

“ Tom want you to know how sorry our family is for your loss. Another great person has been reunited with my mom and dad. Many good memories of your parents and mine. 💕💕💕

sue thayer - December 21, 2017 at 04:57 PM

TA

“ I worked for Bill & Ruby at the theater. He scared me at first, but he had a heart of gold, as did Ruby. Wonderful people, full of such spirit! Bill definitely earned his reward!

Tami - December 21, 2017 at 04:21 PM

LB

“ LYDABELLE BICKNELL lit a candle in memory of Willard "Bill" Koch



LYDABELLE BICKNELL - December 21, 2017 at 03:19 PM

LB

Bill was older than my sisters, but I knew him from the time I was little. His sister Virginia worked at our Bicknell's department store. Condolences to his family

LYDABELLE BICKNELL - December 21, 2017 at 03:23 PM

JK

“ *JOHN T. KOCH lit a candle in memory of Willard "Bill" Koch*



JOHN T. KOCH - December 20, 2017 at 08:30 AM

JK

I worked for Bill for a few years on Fifth street. Very fond memories. shared many a laugh, And yes Bill was all business. Had to quit a few times, but he always convinced me to come back.

JOHN T. KOCH - December 20, 2017 at 08:34 AM

DI

“ *I vaguely remember life in Clare in the 50's, definitely in the 60's, and beyond. Bill Koch would always be good for a tale or two about Clare before those times. We, of retirement age, may not remember what we went into Witbeck's to get but we do remember things from 50-60 years ago like it was yesterday. While Bill may have had edges, he had much more if you had the time or inclination to listen.*

Dave Isaac - December 20, 2017 at 06:29 AM

BD

“ *Bridget Delaney purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Willard "Bill" Koch.*



Bridget Delaney - December 19, 2017 at 11:12 PM

SB

“ *Shelly, Carolyn, Pat And Bridget lit a candle in memory of Willard "Bill" Koch*



Shelly, Carolyn, Pat and Bridget - December 19, 2017 at 10:40 PM



“ *Your Light Shines was purchased for the family of Willard "Bill" Koch.*



December 17, 2017 at 05:00 PM

J-

“ *Judy Koch -Gulotty lit a candle in memory of Willard "Bill" Koch*



Judy Koch -Gulotty - December 16, 2017 at 12:10 AM