

JOSEPH M. KOPPER



Of Turtle Creek, was called home by God, on Friday, January 31, 2025, the day of his 87th birthday.

Joe was married to Marlene (Winters) Kopper for over 63 years and together they raised six wonderful children-Donna (Mike) Gamble, Christine (Greg) Adams, Jennifer (Mike) Blair, Josh (Tammy) Kopper, Elizabeth (Tony) Kolodziejski and the late David (surviving spouse, Maureen). He is also

survived by 14 terrific grandchildren ages four-38.

Throughout his entire life, Joe was a very hard worker. Beginning at age 12, he was hired at Miller & Drugstore in Braddock. He loved telling stories of what great milkshakes he made. Over the years, he went on to many other occupations to support his growing family. He learned many life-long lessons while working at the B&O Railroad, where he worked refurbishing passenger cars and later, the Union Railroad, as a fireman on hot metal trains. Although the job at the Union Railroad paid well for the time, there were often layoffs and he did many other jobs to supplement the family income. Joe pumped gas for Alvin Oskin in Braddock and later managed a large number of Boron Gas stations

Through all of those roles, one of the special things Joe held in his heart was boy scouting and being part of camp staff at Camp Twin Echo. He would tell the story of how he was on staff when they removed an old wooden floor from the dining hall. Joe's favorite camp story was when he took Marlene on their first date to a closing campfire in his shiny jet black 1957 Chevy. He took those Scouting values to heart, always following the Scout Oath and Law trying to lead by example for his family.

60 years ago his daughter, Donna was born at home. The first responders were two North Braddock firemen who had never helped deliver a baby. After that day, he began volunteering for the fire department in Turtle Creek. He eventually trained through CCAC to be an EMT and then a paramedic. Joe was one of the early founders of Rescue 2 and what is now Eastern Area EMS. After a time of volunteering at Rescue 2 in Turtle Creek, he was hired and served as a Pittsburgh Paramedic for 22 years.

As a child and working for the railroads, Joe had developed a great love of trains and model trains. Because of that love, Joe opened J&J Railroad Crossing, a model train store located in the shopping center in Turtle Creek. The store was a family affair with both his son, Josh and his daughter, Elizabeth serving as the only other employees. He loved that store and kept it going for over 18 years to share that love with countless customers over those years.

Joe was a fiercely patriotic American through and through. God, family, and country led him to joining the Navy Reserve when he was 17 and later when his Navy role was retired in McKeesport, he wanted to continue to serve and joined the 911th Air Lift wing of the U.S. Air Force. When he retired from the Air Force he had proudly served his country for over 36 years. He retired with the rank of Master Sergeant and was an expert in Disaster Preparedness and Chemical Warfare. Through those tours he traveled the country and parts of Europe training our country's protectors in those skills.

Joe and his family belonged to and served St. Colman Parish since 1960. He held many, many volunteer positions over the years and until two years ago served as an adult altar server and Eucharist Minister.

Over his lifetime, Joe survived five different forms of cancer and came through with flying colors. During the last year, he was diagnosed with MDS. He was cared for at home by his wife, Marlene, until God called him home on the morning of his 87th birthday. He will be sorely missed.

All are welcome on Tuesday, from 4-8 p.m., at **PATRICK T. LANIGAN FUNERAL HOME & CREMATORY, INC., TURTLE CREEK/MONROEVILLE CHAPEL**, 1111 Monroeville Ave., Turtle Creek, 412-823-9350.

Mass of Christian Burial will be in St. Colman Church of St. Joseph the Worker Parish on Wednesday at 12 noon, followed by a Presentation of Military Honors.

Joe will be laid to rest privately at the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Westmoreland-Fayette Council of the Boy Scouts of America, 2 Garden Center Dr., Greensburg, PA 15601 or www.wfbsa.org.

Send condolences post-gazette.com/gb