



Joseph Stanley Bednarek, Jr.

March 19, 1941 - May 28, 2025

OBITUARY FOR JOSEPH STANLEY BEDNAREK, JR

Joseph S. Bednarek, Jr., our beloved husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather and friend, has crossed the bar on 28 May, 2025, at the age of 84.

When Joe was a little boy, he became lifelong friends with his neighbor, Bill Ritter. They spent countless summers playing baseball, basketball on the sandlots of Elmira. This continued through high school at the Elmira Free Academy. It was there that his high school basketball team won 52 straight games and the state championships in 1957 and 1958. One of Joe's teammates on those EFA basketball teams and the football teams was Ernie Davis, nicknamed the Elmira Express. Joe and Ernie played many sports together from a young age and Ernie went on and played for Syracuse, won the Heisman Trophy and was drafted by the Cleveland Browns. Joe was very proud for their friendship and his accomplishments.

Joe enlisted in the Coast Guard from Elmira, NY on 6 January, 1960, where he went to boot camp in Cape May, NJ.

Upon graduation, his first tour of duty was at Life Boat Station Milwaukee, WI, where he served from until May of 1961. While there he liked to attend Milwaukee Braves baseball games, watching Hank Aaron and his team play

at old County Stadium.

While doing his Seaman's duties at the Coast Guard station, he decided he wanted more action, so he arranged a mutual transfer to the Coast Guard Cutter Westwind (WAGB 281), homeported out of Staten Island, NY. It was during this tour that his ship went to Greenland and the Arctic Circle. During one of these patrols, he earned the Seaman of the Arctic Award, which was presented on national television. It was during this time that he and his high school sweetheart Betty (Betsy) Rhoades wed in Elmira, on 2 Feb, 1962.

In December, 1962 Joe and Betsy transferred to the Coast Guard Academy, in New London, CT. It was here that their only child, Kelly Marie Bednarek was born at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital. Joe was stationed at the Academy until January 1967.

After promotion to Storekeeper First Class, Joe was transferred to the Coast Guard Section Philippines, in Sangley Point, Republic of the Philippines. While stationed there he performed his storekeeper duties, but also found time to visit Bangkok, Manila, Taiwan and Hong Kong with Betsy. Joe continued to play sports there and was awarded the 1969 Captain's Cup Athlete of the Year at the Sangley Point Naval Base.

In 1971 Joe, Betsy and Kelly were transferred to Training Center Alameda, where he was promoted to Warrant Officer, and ran the recruit clothing locker. It was here that they bought their first home and it had a pool. He loved swimming with the family there.

Joe then had two tours in Elizabeth City, NC, first at the Air Base and then the Aircraft Repair and Supply Center. As the NAFA Officer he managed the officer and enlisted clubs and arranged some fun parties and military balls.

Then it was back to the Academy. Where he ran the cadet clothing locker. It was there that his SK2 in the warehouse met his daughter at the Coast Guard Exchange. Kelly and Jim Shields were later wed at the CG chapel. His first grandson Justin was later born at the same hospital as Kelly.

Then to finish out Joe's final years of his Coast Guard career, Joe and Betsy returned to Elizabeth City at the Aircraft Repair and Supply Center. Where he retired in 1990 with over 30 years of service.

During Joe's career, he earned the following awards: Rifle Marksman, Sea Service Ribbon, Artic Service Ribbon, National Defense Ribbon, two Letters of Commendation awards, an Achievement Medal, and three Good Conduct Awards.

After his retirement, Joe and Betsy returned to Elmira, to be with family and build their dream home. There second grandson Aaron was born in 1992. Joe spent his second career golfing and working at Sears, selling appliances.

In 2004 Joe and Betsy decided they wanted to be near Kelly and Jim's family, so they moved to Chesterfield, MI to watch the grandchildren grow. They particularly enjoyed watching the grandsons Justin and Aaron swim in high school and at Wayne State. They considered this to be their favorite move.

Joseph was preceded in death by his beautiful wife of 58 years, Betty Jane Rhoades Bednarek. He was also preceded in death by his father Joseph, SR and mother Mary Bebble. His only surviving sibling is his sister Mary Jo Bednarek Thomas. Unfortunately, he was preceded in death by his brother Charles Bednarek and sisters Ruth Bednarek Dittman, and Patricia Bednarek Pontbriand. He is survived by his daughter Kelly Marie Bednarek Shields and her husband Chief Warrant Officer 4 (Ret.) James Edward Shields and their

two sons and their families. Justin Shields and his wife Lovisa and their children Holly, Otis and Bo, reside in Stockholm, Sweden. Aaron Shields and his wife Nicole and their daughter Elouise reside in Chesterfield, MI.

Joseph was a role model for his family, friends and fellow Coasties. He loved his family and his country and was very proud of his Coast Guard service. We wish him, his family and all who loved him fair winds and following seas.

He will be cremated in a private ceremony and later interred at the Great Lakes National Cemetery, in Holly, MI., where a brief service, with military honors, will be held for family. The family welcomes your fond remembrances of Joe, on the Wasik Funeral Home Obituary website at <http://www.wasikfuneralhome.com/obituaries/>. In lieu of flowers, Joe prefers donations to the McLaren Macomb Ted B. Wahby Cancer Center, which can be made at this website: <http://www.mcmaren.org/Macomb-foundation/donation-mclaren-macomb-foundation>.

Tribute Wall

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“ Joe will always be remembered as wonderful husband, father, grandfather and great role model. It was a honor to have known him. Our thoughts and prayers to Kelly, Jim and your extended family. God bless.

Don and Jo Ann Wilber - June 17, 2025 at 12:35 PM