



## Jeffrey R. DeRidder

July 15, 1942 - December 26, 2020

Jeffrey Robert DeRidder, 78, of Breitung Township, passed away peacefully at home on Saturday, December 26 and drove off to that great racetrack in the sky.

Jeff was born July 15, 1942 in Norway, Michigan to the late Joseph and Lucille (Dollinger) DeRidder. After his father was killed in action in WWII, he attended elementary schools in Norway and Iron Mountain before moving to Chicago with his mother, a professional singer, for several years. He spent summers in Iron Mountain working in his grandmother's restaurant, the Casa Loma, and graduated from Iron Mountain High School in 1960. He studied mechanical engineering at Michigan Technological University for two years but later transferred to Northern Michigan University where he obtained a degree in Math and Physics. He was employed by Lake Shore for many years, followed by Cable Constructors, Inc. (CCI), and IMECO before officially retiring in 2012. From 1987 to 2002 he owned and operated Miller Floral with his wife, Jacalyn, who preceded him in death in 2000. His ability to view situations objectively made him ideal for the position as volunteer mediator for Dickinson County Courts from 2004 to 2015.

Jeff believed in community participation and was involved in many organizations including Rotary Club of Iron Mountain Kingsford for 32 years, Dickinson County Planning Commission for 20 years, Board of Directors of

the former Crystal Lake Community Center for 36 years, Just Cruizin' Car Club, Dickinson County Racing Association, and was an umpire for girls' high school volleyball and the women's league. With his exceptional voice and vast knowledge of vehicles of all types, Jeff was frequently called upon to announce at car shows, stock car races, truck & tractor pulling contests, and mud runs. He also provided a rich bass voice to several church choirs and Dickinson County Community Chorus.

Also known as The Car Guy, Jeff purchased his first car at 14, a 1936 Ford Coupe, and later drag-raced at strips throughout the Upper Midwest. In retirement, he hunted for "barn finds" for gear-head friends or to restore for himself.

Never without a handy phrase or word of advice, Jeff's favorites were "Don't criticize, condemn, or complain," and "Dads can do anything," until we pointed out he couldn't think of anything he couldn't do. He greeted everyone with a big, cheerful smile and was kind and attentive – unless you interrupted the 5 o'clock news or a Packers' game. He loved Clint Eastwood, Paul Harvey, racquetball, telling bad jokes, playing tricks on unsuspecting victims, and the Kentucky Derby. He hated Brussels sprouts and drivers who hog the left lane. He was one of the few men in the Upper Peninsula who didn't go to hunting camp because he couldn't bear the thought of killing an animal, except for the chipmunks that nested in his old cars. Jeff had a soft spot for pets and was never without at least one cat or dog.

Having visited every custard stand and bakery in a 5-state area, Jeff had an insatiable sweet tooth and reluctantly leaves behind 4 pounds of fudge, 3 dozen raspberry croissants, 2 gallons of chocolate syrup, and a multitude of additional treats that may prove helpful during the next pandemic.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by approximately 13

dogs, 11 cats, an alligator, both kidneys, and a 1961 Tempest.

Jeff's colorful legacy will live on through his wife, Barbara, brothers Ted Seymour of California and Steven Seymour (Rita Anderson) of Illinois, daughters Dacia DeRidder of Illinois and Jayna (Keith) Huotari of Iron Mountain and their mother, Dr. Rena Richtig, nephew Steve Seymour, niece April Seymour, grandsons James Ashbacher, Maxwell Wagnitz, Joey Ashbacher, and Mattson Hurter, great-grandchildren Evelyn and Aiden Ashbacher, and stepchildren Whitney Hein, Rhonda (Mark) LeSage, Steven (Diane) Applin, Jill (Adam) Lyon, and their families.

A celebration of the man, the myth, the legend will be held Wednesday, December 30 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Iron Mountain. Services will follow at 12:00 pm with Rev. Paul Strom officiating. Masks are required. Burial will be in Iron Mountain Cemetery Park.

Condolences to the family of Jeff DeRidder may be expressed online at [www.ernashfuneralhomes.com](http://www.ernashfuneralhomes.com).

The family has entrusted the Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home with the arrangements.

# Cemetery Details

## Cemetery Park

Cedar Ave  
Iron Mountain, MI 49801

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

DEC 30. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church  
1210 S. Kimberly Ave.  
Iron Mountain, MI 49801

## Funeral Service

DEC 30. 12:00 PM (CT)

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church  
1210 S. Kimberly Ave.  
Iron Mountain, MI 49801

# Tribute Wall

JM

“ Although I've not lived in Iron Mountain for many years, I still miss the Jeff DeRidder I remember so fondly! I join his wonderful family in keeping his memory alive. Jerry Zacks

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**Jerome S Zacks MD** - July 09, 2021 at 01:20 AM

BO

“ We will miss Jeff at the Just Cruzin' car club functions. His announcing was the greatest. He was a good friend to all. Bea St. Onge and Maynard Buehler

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**Bea St Onge** - January 04, 2021 at 03:22 PM

CS

“ My sincere sympathy to the family of Jeff DeRidder. A distant cousin, I shared a note that my late Mother, Florence Vaerwyck, received from Jeff's Father's, Joe's family when he was killed in World War II at a young age. Talking to his wife about this history, I knew that he was a very special man, and, that sure is outlined in his beautiful obituary! May the good Lord bless all of you, and, I know that you must be so grateful for the full,life he lived.

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**Carol Socha** - December 30, 2020 at 06:37 PM

DR

“ A fellow car club member who did more than his share will be greatly missed. I remember Jeff when he was a teenager, and I had a souped-up '55 Chevy at my brother, Gerry's Shell station across from the old Dickinson Hotel on B Street in Iron Mountain. I had the hood up exposing three deuces, and the next thing I knew, Jeff and a friend approached the car and were excited to put it mildly. I remember the incident, but I didn't know this teenager was Jeff until he told me just a few years ago that he was that teenager. The year was around 1959.  
It was a pleasure knowing Jeff, and he will be sadly missed.

*Don Rittenhouse*

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**Donald Rittenhouse** - December 30, 2020 at 05:06 PM

LW

“ Our good friend for the past fifty years. Those were the days of laughter and singing and we will now grieve. He will be missed.....  
Our hearts go out to you Barb, Janya, and Dacia.

*Pat and Larry Wittenbach*

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**Larry/Pat Wittenbach** - December 30, 2020 at 03:29 PM

RS

“ So sorry to hear of Jeff's passing. I worked with Jeff for many years at Lake Shore. In fact, he was my first supervisor when I joined the company. I only have fond memories of Jeff from our days at Lake Shore. He was a mentor to many. Last time I ran into him at Super One, we talked for quite a while. It was always good to see him. He will be missed.

*Ron Sendzik*

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**Ronald Sendzik** - December 30, 2020 at 09:09 AM

WC

“ Dear Jayna and Keith, Dayna and All,

*So sorry to learn of Jeff's passing. Losing a parent is always difficult, but you all did so much to make these last months easier for him. He was a wonderful man...kind, funny and certain to make you smile. Please accept our sincere sympathy as you grieve.*

*Bill and Jan Cummings*

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**William J. Cummings** - December 30, 2020 at 12:28 AM

LH

“ So sorry for your loss. I'll always remember Jeff's warm smile at family gatherings. He was so proud of his wonderful grandsons.  
*Lyn Hoeksema*

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**lyn hoeksema** - December 29, 2020 at 01:09 PM

MK

“ We were sad to hear of Jeff's passing. He was a very unique individual who served his community in so many ways. His skills as a mediator who could defuse difficult situations always amazed us in District Court. He will be missed. Rest in peace Jeff.

*Michael Kusz (retired District Judge)*

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**Michael J Kusz** - December 29, 2020 at 10:35 AM

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“ A few memories:

*While attending Michigan Tech, Jeff & I shared an apartment together on College Ave for one academic year. He would leave every Friday afternoon for Iron Mt (to cook/help out his Grandma Bess @ the Casa Loma) & return the following Sunday evening back to Houghton. We called it "The Jeff Express", a reliable, scheduled run we could always count on! He had various cars, some reliable others would need some "adjustments" alongside the road. One car I recall was a Michigan State Police car (a blue Plymouth with yellow police decal still visible on both doors) with a pushed in trunk from an accident & Jeff picked up at an auction. It had a Steward Warner calibrated speedometer to clock speeders & I asked Jeff as we drove on the lonely Covington stretch, how fast will this police car go & with that he quickly said "we'll find out" and he immediately floored it & away we went to 120mph actual! Yikes!!*

*One winter, I recall riding back to Tech w/Jeff in a Cadillac convertible that had engine overheating problems enroute. Jeff solved the heat transfer problem by turning the car heater up to max temp & turning the heater fan on high. It did help keep the engine temp down but we were all gasping for air inside. Opening car windows brought in freezing cold outside air!! It was a trip of large temperature swings all the way back!*

*The Casa Loma had a satellite kitchen in our apt on College Ave. Jeff would bring back a stack of hamburger patties neatly stacked vertically w/neatly cut waxpaper between each patty + a jar containing the "secret sauce" which under severe questioning, he would never unveil what was in it! We enjoyed a bite of the Casa Loma in Houghton many nights!*

*Barbara, Jayna, Dacia & family- you are in our thoughts & prayers. We will miss our great friend Jeff but carry with us many fond memories spanning many years...*

*Nick Eutizzi (Carol)*

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**Nick Eutizzi (Carol)** - December 29, 2020 at 04:12 AM

DD

“ *REST IN PEACE MY FRIEND!!! You had a Great Life and made friend's with everyone you met!!!*

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**Dick & Gail Dabb** - December 28, 2020 at 05:52 PM

PD

“ *Peter and Paul DeRidder purchased the Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet for the family of Jeffrey R. DeRidder.*



**Peter and Paul DeRidder** - December 28, 2020 at 04:01 PM

JH

“ *Jeff and I grew up together until 1958 when I moved to Ohio. We worked together on his 1936 Ford. I never got to see it run. A great friend.*

*John (Bunky) Holcombe.  
Tres Piedreas, NM*

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**John Holcombe** - December 28, 2020 at 02:54 PM

TB

“ I was saddened to hear of Jeff's passing. I first met Jeff at his Grandparents restaurant, the Casa Loma in the 1950's. The restaurant was located on my Grandparents land and my cousin, Jerry Magnuson, was a close friend of Jeff and lived next door to the restaurant. We would spend countless hours playing at the restaurant. We were at the age when most young boys interests included cars and I recall Jeff building a hot rod with a Cadillac engine! As I recall my older cousin had purchased a car from Jeff's Grandfather and we would drive it down the old highway before we had drivers licenses. The old Chevrolet apparently was Jeff's Grandfathers car and we picked it up in a garage and towed it home. In later years we both attended Michigan Tech and both transferred to Northern Michigan University.

*Jeff was a great guy and he will be missed by many.*

*Terry Burak*

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**Terry Burak** - December 28, 2020 at 02:17 PM

JH

“ I have a lot of great memories, going to the racer's auction in Green Bay, picking up recently purchased cars, looking at prospective purchases, or just shooting the breeze at the garage or at a car show. They were all GREAT memories. He made all his friends feel like his best friends. "Jimmy" will truly miss him.

*James Heirman*

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**James Heirman** - December 27, 2020 at 08:01 PM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Jeffrey R. DeRidder.*



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December 27, 2020 at 07:58 PM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Jeffrey R. DeRidder.*



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December 27, 2020 at 07:38 PM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Jeffrey R. DeRidder.*



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December 27, 2020 at 07:24 PM