



Joseph "Merle" Parsons Jr.

June 7, 1942 - May 25, 2025

Joseph "Merle" Parsons Jr., 82, of Iron Mountain passed away peacefully on Sunday, May 25, 2025, at Marshfield Medical Center - Dickinson.

He was born in Petoskey, MI, on June 7, 1942, son of the late Joseph Sr. and Betty (Bird) Parsons. Merle graduated from Petoskey High School in 1961. After high school he completed 2 years at his local college and then transferred to the University of Michigan, where he completed his BA in Political Science in 1965. On January 21, 1967, Merle was married to the former Elizabeth "Betty" Gray, just prior to his planned enlistment with the U.S. Air Force on June 14, 1967. Merle served 4 years in the Air Force as a Communications Specialist, being honorably discharged on June 11, 1971, at the rank of Staff Sergeant. Later that year, following in his mother's footsteps, Merle managed his first Sears catalog store in Monroe, WI. In 1974 he was transferred to Iron Mountain to manage that Sears location. When the catalog business was dissolved, he became an owner in the Dealer Store program. Merle retired from Sears in 2008 after 37 years with the company.

Merle was an active member of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, serving the parish for over 14 years scheduling liturgical ministries. He also served his community volunteering at St. Vincent de Paul. One of his biggest passions was playing chess, as evidenced by his determination to travel through a snowstorm to Chicago for a simultaneous exhibition. He was one of

only two people out of 67 to achieve a draw with grandmaster champion Tigran Petrosian. His other favorite pastime was cheering on his beloved Packers in full team regalia surrounded by a sea of green and gold. Merle's analytical and curious mind lent well to his study of history, writing, and his fascination with aviation (EAA) and maps. He was an excellent navigator and would often have "arguments" with his GPS system named "Michelle" during his and Betty's road trips.

Merle will be deeply missed by his wife of 58 years, Betty; daughter, Lori (Adam) of Minneapolis; son, Jeff (Mercia) of Salt Lake City; grandson, Ryan Paul Parsons; 2 sisters-in-law, Marilyn (Gray) Purkiss and Caroline (Cloud) Gray; 5 nephews, Steve (Sherry), Jim, Mike (Dawn), and Marc (Shebbie) Purkiss, and Eric (Gina) Gray; 2 nieces, Juli (Todd) Zenner and Jill Hutchinson; cousin, Marcy (Herb) Gordon; and numerous other nieces, nephews and cousins.

In addition to his parents, Merle is preceded in death by an infant son, Bryan Richard Parsons.

Father Michael Chenier will be officiating the Funeral Mass at the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, 500 Blaine St., on Friday, May 30, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. Burial information will be released once determined on the Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home website.

Merle's family would like to thank the entire staffs of St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center of Green Bay and Marshfield Medical Center - Dickinson for their compassionate care as well as all those involved in planning his U.P. Honor Flight.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to your preferred charity.

Condolences may be expressed to the family of Joseph "Merle" Parsons Jr. online at www.ernashfuneralhomes.com.

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

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

MAY **30**. 11:00 AM (CT)

Immaculate Conception Catholic Church
500 Blaine St.
Iron Mountain, MI 49801

Tribute Wall

JB

“ We will miss you Merle! You were a joyful face to see at mass. Thank you for all you did for the church. May you rest in God's kingdom!
Joyel Brule & Gary Latourelle.

Joyel J Brule - June 03, 2025 at 12:05 PM

LC

“ So very sorry to learn of Merle's death. Merle's parents & my parents all worked together at the Petoskey Sears Store. My mom was Doris Yell, Betty & Joe were good buddies. When I graduated from High School (1965) my first job was at Montgomery Wards so our moms were on one end of the block & I was on the other. I have fond memories of the Parson's and remember so well how proud Betty & Joe were of Merle. Sincerely, Lynda (Yell) Christensen Boyne City, MI



Lynda Christensen - June 02, 2025 at 12:49 AM

JL

“ Betty, Lori, Jeff, so sorry for your loss, he was always a good friend and a terrific salesman, all of our appliances came from Sears. We always loved talking with Merle at Sears. Jeff so sorry we were not able to attend, Brian was working and I am down with the flu. All our love

jude lehto - June 01, 2025 at 07:38 PM

CP

“ I am so sorry to hear of Merle’s passing. He was my first ever boss, hiring me right out of high school. My sympathies to the family.
Cathy Mainville Pera

Cathy Pera - May 28, 2025 at 02:43 PM

JJ

“ Betty, Lori, and Jeff, our sincere sympathies for the loss of your husband-father. He was a good friend, always following and commenting on our family's activities that we posted on Facebook.

John and Judy - May 27, 2025 at 02:34 PM