



Michael John Bjerkesett

January 18, 2017

Bjerkesett, Michael John 69. Born June 22, 1947. Left this world January 18, 2017. Survived by: sisters Marlene Jezierski (George) and Karen Getting; nieces Rebecca Johnson (Steven), Barbara Nyhammer (Eric Scheller), Jaqueline Krekelberg (Daniel), Sarah Getting, Ruth Getting; nephew Creighton Getting (Gina); grand-nieces Alyssa, Leah, Amanda, Laura, Abigail; grand-nephews Nickolas, Jacob, Creighton, Nolan; and a country-wide circle of loving friends and colleagues. He was preceded in death by parents Ole and Barbara Bjerkesett and brother-in-law Leon Getting. Mike was an extraordinary, humble man of many talents; entrepreneur, innovator, creator, activist, mentor, leader, philanthropist. For decades he was dedicated to improving the lives of people with disabilities. Graduating from Fridley High school he was named to all conference and all state in football. He attended Bemidji State University until a car accident in 1967 caused his paraplegia. After his recovery he earned a bachelor's degree in business from Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU), then worked at North Memorial Hospital as a rehabilitation counselor, a position he created while also becoming a leader of community handicap accessibility activists. In 1974 he formed his first non-profit, the United Handicapped Federation and in 1975 the second, the National Handicap Housing Institute (NHHI) where he served as Executive Director until his retirement in 2014. Known to be one of the nation's leading accessible housing developers, NHHI has designed and built more than 15,000 affordable accessible housing units throughout the nation. He has

been honored with numerous awards. After retirement, Mike's passion for the handicapped continued as he formed another nonprofit, Accessible Architecture, Inc. which will provide state of the art barrier free designs at no cost and resources via the internet. After death Mike's legacy will also live on in his bequest to SMSU Foundation in the creation of a scholarship for students planning to work for non-profits. The scope of his giving does not end there. Abundantly generous with time and talents, this loving man supported dozens with financial and personal struggles. His wit, optimism and humor brought light and love to all he encountered. The world is darker without Mike's presence, he brightened many lives with sparkling Irish eyes, humor, passion for sports and commitment to friendship. Left behind is his love, etched on the hearts of all who knew him. Mike's family invites friends to gather for reflection, story-telling, music and refreshments at a celebration of his life on Sunday, January 29, 11 a.m. at Silverwood Park in the Great Hall, 2500 County Rd. E. St. Anthony, MN. Memorials preferred to SMSU Foundation in Marshall, MN or the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute Foundation in Minneapolis. Washburn-McReavy.com Edina Chapel 952-920-3996

Tribute Wall

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“ Mike and I played football together. It was a tragedy with his accident, but he never gave up. I am a retired physical therapist and was able to meet up with him when I was in training at North Memorial where he was working. My sincere condolences to his family.

Tony Yurick

Tony Yurick - January 24, 2017 at 07:58 PM