



Merrill E. Bales

January 17, 1935 - June 17, 2022

PUNTA GORDA, FLORIDA – Merrill E. Bales, 87, of Manitou Beach, MI, Punta Gorda, FL and formerly of Adrian, MI died early Friday morning, June 17, 2022.

Born January 17, 1935, in Adrian, he was the son of Virgil and Olga (Schultz) Bales. Following his high school graduation in 1952, Merrill attended Adrian College. On June 28, 1953, Merrill married Judith Anne Jasmund. She survives to cherish almost 70 years of love and memories.

He began working at the family business, Bales, Inc., that was founded by his father and great-grandfather. Hard work and dedication to the family business of trucking and excavating ran in his blood. At the young age of eleven years old, Merrill had moved his first load of topsoil. In 1986 Merrill was named the CEO of Bales Trucking. In 1997, after 45 years in the family business, Merrill formally retired and passed the business on to the next generation.

Merrill was devoted to his family and enjoyed spending time with them whether sitting by the water, fishing or traveling long distances. He and Judy made many trips to the Caribbean and Alaska, and traveled to New Zealand, Australia and South America. Their adventures included traversing the Panama Canal, the St Lawrence and Mississippi River as well as caravanning through Mexico and Canada.

Merrill enjoyed serving and was very active the communities in which he lived. He chaired the Lenawee County Road Commission for 24 of the 25 years he served. He also was Chairman of the City of Adrian Planning Commission, serving for 17 years. Merrill loved being near the water and was a proud member of the Devils Lake Yacht Club for nearly 50 years, where he was named Commodore in 1977 and was Fleet Captain of Fleet #31. He served as a Board Member of the Lenawee County Historical Society. Faith was also very important to Merrill. He attended the Trenton Hills United Brethren Church for decades and was a member of the Burnt Store Presbyterian Church in Florida.

In his spare time, Merrill, known in sailing circles as MB, enjoyed racing and participated in many regattas in Michigan, the Midwest and as far as Florida and New Jersey. Merrill and Judy loved dancing together – square dancing, line dancing, and ballroom dancing. Merrill was often the caller, showing his tendency to rise to leadership in whatever organization he served.

Merrill was well known (especially around the Lake) for his green thumb. He and Judy were avid gardeners and his beautiful acres of roses, hostas, lilies and daffodils were the source of joy to many and toured by Garden Clubs from as far as Toledo.

In addition to his beloved wife, Judy, Merrill is survived by his children, Merri-Jo Bales (Randy Sahajdack) of Manitou Beach, and Howard (Dawn) Bales of Adrian; six grandchildren Jill (Ben) Rainwater, Kyle (Jana) Keller, Brandi Bales, Corey (Whitney) Keller, Tom (Jen) Sahajdack, and Caitlin (Jeff) Glancy; 12 great-grandchildren Bailey, Wyatt, Carly, Leah, Allegra, Johann, Janice, Skyler, Chase, Hunter, Hailee, and Ryder; his siblings, Judy Lee (Don) Ford of Adrian and Tim (Peggy) Bales of Adrian; and sisters-in-law, Sandra (Robert) Mitchell, Joanne (Richard) Rosener and Mary Ellen Bales. And many wonderful friends and neighbors.

In addition to his parents, Merrill was preceded in death by his grandson, Adam Bales; great-grandson, Waylon Keller; and brother, Virgil “Bill” Bales.

A funeral service for Merrill will take place on Friday, June 24, 2022 at 11:00 a.m. at Wagley Funeral Home, Adrian with Rev. Larry Betz officiating. A graveside service will follow at 2:30 p.m. at Greens Lakeside Cemetery in Manitou Beach. Visitation will be held on Thursday from 5:00-7:00 p.m. at the funeral home.

The family suggests that memorial contributions in Merrill’s name be made to Tunnel to Towers or Wounded Warriors.

Online condolences and memories may be shared at www.WagleyFuneralHomes.com.

Cemetery Details

Greens Lakeside Cemetery

Manitou Road
Manitou Beach, MI 49253

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN 23. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Wagley Funeral Home (Adrian)
1501 W. Maumee St.
Adrian, MI 49221
info@wagleyfuneralhome.com
<https://www.WagleyFuneralHome.com>

Funeral Service

JUN 24. 11:00 AM (ET)

Wagley Funeral Home (Adrian)
1501 W. Maumee St.
Adrian, MI 49221
info@wagleyfuneralhome.com
<https://www.WagleyFuneralHome.com>

Graveside Service

JUN 24. 2:30 PM (ET)

Greens Lakeside Cemetery
Manitou Road
Manitou Beach, MI 49253

Tribute Wall

TM

“ To the Bales Family--- I am sorry to learn the passing of Mr. Bales. He was a great friend to many. He will truly be missed by many. I hope all the good memories, will help you get through this difficult time. God Bless you all. Tamara Michael Mcneff

Tami McNeff - June 23 at 09:00 PM

JH

“ There's a time and place where you meet somebody special. When I moved to Punta Gorda Florida I met a special man. From now and forever there will be nobody of special is my buddy Merrill.
Miss you and love you buddy.
Jack Jenny Jelena Rocky and Bella

jack Holder - June 23 at 03:28 PM

MF

“ Mary Leah, Skip and family purchased the Memorial Trees for the family of Merrill E. Bales.



Mary Leah, Skip and family - June 23 at 02:34 PM

ME

“ Dear Judy, Merri-Jo, Randy and family,

Merrill was a gentle and caring soul. He always liked to be busy and took part in many community activities. We recall one time when he volunteered us for the canal clean up. Of course guess who drove the boat and who cleaned up!! His amazing sense of humor and love for nature is something that we will always remember. He loved to fish and was more than happy to take us along. One time he and Judy called us out of the blue and said “It’s a beautiful day. We would like to take you girls for a boat ride down the Peace River so you can see the spectacular flocks of birds on the islands and then we will go to the Navigator for lunch.” That experience along with so many other enjoyable moments will be cherished always thanks to a very special couple and their lovely family.

Merrill will always be in our heart and we are grateful to have crossed paths. May the warmth of friends carry you through this time of sorrow and bring peace to you and your family. Love endures forever.

Thinking of you – Mary Woodruff and Charlene Eastman

Mary Woodruff & Charlene Eastman - June 23 at 02:07 PM



“ To Judy, Meeri-Jo and Howard and the entire Bales family. I'm so sorry to hear of Merrill's passing. He was such a wonderful man. I have fond memories of my parents, Claude and Phyllis Miller, square dancing with your dad calling and the Hobo dinners at the lake. They were great friends to my parents. He will be truly missed.

Janice (Miller) Mistriel

Janice Mistriel - June 23 at 12:23 PM



“ Lavender Reflections Spray was purchased for the family of Merrill E. Bales.



June 23 at 10:48 AM

JA

“ Thinking of all the wonderful, shared birthday parties, and fishing trips with Merrill and Judy in the Florida Everglades, and then going out to lunch at Papa Joe's.

I am Standing Upon the Seashore - by Henry Van Dyke

*I am standing upon the seashore.
A ship at my side spreads her white
sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean.*

*She is an object of beauty and strength.
I stand and watch her until at length
she hangs like a speck of white cloud
just where the sea and sky come
to mingle with each other.*

*Then, someone at my side says;
"There, she is gone!"*

*"Gone where?"
Gone from my sight. That is all.
She is just as large in mast and hull
and spar as she was when she left my side
and she is just as able to bear her
load of living freight to her destined port.
Her diminished size is in me, not in her.*

*And just at the moment when someone at my side says, "There, she is gone!"
There are other eyes watching her coming,
and other voices ready to take up the glad shout;
"Here she comes!"
And that is dying.*

I know Helen was there to greet Merrill!

Jerry Abrecht - June 23 at 08:59 AM



“ Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant was purchased for the family of Merrill E. Bales.



June 22 at 09:06 PM

DJ

“ Merrill was always a very kind and caring guy and i remember him being voted the most valuable player by the football team in 1952. Merrill married his high school sweetheart a good friend and neighbor of mine from kindergarten to graduation the last twenty years we attended and joined together the Burnt Store Presbyterian Church in Punta Gorda, Florida. Merrill and Judy's sun-in-law Randy was my granddaughter Michelle's college professor. Merrill and Judy took my son and i fishing at their place in Florida and wore us out catching fish!! Merrill was a true christian always kind and caring and I have great memories so blessed.

Dr. Constance jackson - June 22 at 05:09 PM

RT

“ To Judy, Merri-Jo, Randy and your families we want you to know we believe the greatest gifts of life are love and friendship. We will be eternally grateful for being able to share both with all of you and Merrill. In memory of Merrill we want to share a little poem:

Once a day and sometimes more
You knock upon my daydream door,
I say warmly “come right in,
I’m glad you’re here with me again!”
Then we sit down and have a chat,
Recalling this, discussing that,
Until some task that I must do
Forces me away from you.
Reluctantly I say goodbye
Smiling with a little sigh,
For though my daydreams bring you near
I wish that you were really here.
But what reality can’t change
My dreams and wishes can arrange.
For through my wishing you’ll be brought
To me each day, my guest in thought.

We cannot be with you in person, but please know we are truly there in spirit!
Much love, Ron & Cheryl 

Ron & Cheryl Thompson - June 22 at 02:50 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Merrill E. Bales.*



June 22 at 12:16 PM

TT

“ *Tony and Terry purchased the Love Everlasting Bouquet for the family of Merrill E. Bales.*



Tony and Terry - June 22 at 11:50 AM

DJ

“ *Dan and Colleen McGuyre, Darlene & Craig Knudson, Arlene & Darryl Jenkins purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Merrill E. Bales.*



Dan and Colleen McGuyre, Darlene & Craig Knudson, Arlene & Darryl Jenkins - June 22 at 11:25 AM

PD

“ *Dear Judy, Merri-Jo, Howard, Randy, Dawn, and family - Rod and I just loved Merrill. He definitely was one of a kind - a sweeter guy could never be found.*

I don't need to tell you that the world has lost one of its best. He had a wonderful family and many friends and all will miss him terribly.

Love you guys

Phyllis Dorr

Phyllis Dorr - June 22 at 10:54 AM

JF

“ Jerry Abrecht & family purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Merrill E. Bales.



Jerry Abrecht & family - June 21 at 06:49 PM

ID

“ Judy, Merri Jo, Randy and all, I am so sorry to hear this sad news. Merrill was always kind and supportive and very giving of his time without asking for anything. I will always be appreciative of all his help when I took over the books from DLYC from him, and of his friendship. I did enjoy sailing with him the couple of times I could squeeze in as his crew. And I'll miss his hugs. :)
Irma David

Irma David - June 21 at 05:07 PM

NH

“ Merrill always had a smile and a welcoming comment upon seeing him each season at Devils Lake. We watched him sail, most often winning the race, many times here on Devils Lake and in regattas. He was always an active member of Lightning Fleet 31. My parents, Venette & Jack Beal, were friends for many years. I will always remember his friendship throughout my years here on the lake. He will be remembered fondly, my many. Judy, my prayers are with you during this time of sorrow and loss. Fondly, Nancy Beal Hoofnagle.

Nancy Hoofnagle - June 21 at 04:15 PM

JA

“ Judy and family..So sorry to hear of Merrill passing. Many fond memories of Adrian High School and all of the activities we all enjoyed. Sending my sincere condolences to you and family. Jill Ashley

Jill A Ashley - June 21 at 10:48 AM

RP

“ Judy, remember the famous meeting with Merrilat and friends where they didn't want it to be an open meeting? You and Merrill walked out, Bob and Cora followed, Nate and Kathy left, and we reluctantly followed....Most of us left the church after that... Big brouhaha over nothing except maybe we underappreciated Rev Burkey, and got involved in Nate's argument with him.... .. We did appreciate Merrill's kindness and generosity in providing a house for Nate's attempts to help out druggies...In the end that didn't come to much, helped a few lost souls for a short time. But we tried... ..Remembering your long friendship with Lynn and Gerry and all your sailing adventures... Most of the old gang is gone now, and those remaining are dealing with the problems of aging bodies. But we will always remember the good times and fine person Merrill was. He is now with Jesus, and we will see him again when we go to our next life...He left a fine legacy to his family. We wish you peace and joy and consolation in his passing....

Robert Ploegstra. - June 21 at 10:39 AM



“ Having been next door neighbors to the Bales family for 65? years, it would take several pages to share memories!!! We LOVE this family, they are our family for our entire lives and will miss Merrill terribly. He was incredibly caring, generous, active and attentive to everyone in his world!! Love all of you and we will always hold our wonderful memories of Merrill in our hearts.

The Kern Family

Susan Kern - June 21 at 09:34 AM

TW

“ So sorry for your loss prayers for all of you guys



Tracie Willett - June 20 at 06:08 PM

NS

“ Judy, Merri Jo and the entire Bales family, we were crushed to read of Merrill's passing. We were so lucky to work with Merrill at the Devils Lake Yacht Club for three seasons. I'm sure there were many times he wondered what he had gotten himself into volunteering to mentor us. We are forever grateful for the privilege! Bob still tells stories of Sunday morning sailing with MB and the bruises that followed. So many good times. Prayers and much love to all of you!
Bob & Nancy Sroufe

nancy sroufe - June 20 at 03:50 PM

PT

“ Judy, we have so many great memories of Parker and I and you and Merrill together.
Hope to be able to come. Pat Tagsold

Pat Tagsold - June 20 at 01:59 PM

MH

“ Merri Jo, Randy and Family: while I never had the pleasure of meeting Merrill in person, I felt that I knew him through the stories MJ has shared over the last few years. What a gentle soul and such a kind face. His legacy will live on in each of you, his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. How fortunate that he was part of this earth for such a long and fulfilling time. So many beautiful memories will live on in each of you as you celebrate his life and remaining spirit in each of you. My loving thoughts are with you all. Love, Marti

Marti Heil - June 20 at 01:14 PM

TB

“ I'm saddened to learn of Merrill's passing, he was a wonderful person that will always be admired and his thoughtfulness appreciated. I had the pleasure of working for Merrill at Bales, Inc for many years and remember that time with fondness. I send his family my love and sympathy, I know he will be missed.

Tonya Braman - June 20 at 09:47 AM