



Charles Leroy Hess

August 15, 1936 - November 2, 2025

Charles Leroy Hess, age 89, of Grand Ledge, Michigan, passed away on November 2, 2025, after a long and fulfilling life. Born on August 15, 1936, in Middleport, Ohio, Charles was a devoted husband, father, grandfather and friend who left a profound impact on all who knew him. Throughout his life, Charles was known for his warm art, generous spirit, quick wit, and steadfast dedication to his family and friends. He exemplified strength, compassion, and integrity, guiding those around him with quiet wisdom, unwavering love, and a gentle humor that brought comfort and joy to every room he entered.

Charles worked for the Department of Defense with Top Secret security clearance from nineteen years old as a technician working with engineers and scientists on defense department contracts at Battelle Memorial Research Institute. Most notable was perfecting the world's first solid fuel propellant which allowed rockets to leave the Earth's gravitational force, and his work to develop a rocket heat shield, which both changed space exploration and space travel worldwide. Being the last living member of that original team was something he cherished.

Then along came Uncle Sam and he decided to honor the call. The Army saw his security clearance stats and offered him the intelligence field as a Special Agent/Investigator. He was appointed warrant officer status after only thirty-three months, and for many years was the youngest one in the Army

Intelligence Command. He retired as Chief Warrant Officer (CW4) in 1982, worked another fourteen years for the Department of Defense as a Civil Servant and Contract Investigator, finally retiring in 2003.

His keen insight, leadership, and unwavering dedication contributed greatly to the security of his nation. Throughout his distinguished military career, he was recognized with numerous honors, including the Bronze Star, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal (five awards), Armed Forces Reserve Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Gold Recruiter Badge, Good Conduct Medal (five awards), Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Meritorious Unit Commendation, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, presented by the government of South Vietnam.

He was also awarded a military decoration as Captain for distinguished service, and received five additional campaign ribbons from the U.S. Government and Department of Defense. His exemplary service earned him the deep respect and lasting gratitude of his fellow soldiers and his community.

Charles had many passions that brought joy and richness to his life. He loved the outdoors, whether fishing, tending to his gardens and plants with his remarkable green thumb, or relaxing at the family cottage surrounded by nature. For over 40 years, he was a proud member of the double deck pinochle and euchre card club with dear friends, where his spirit and sharp sense of humor were always on display. A lifelong music lover, Charles had a beautiful singing voice and shared it generously as a member of a Barbershop Quartet in Grand Ledge for many years. Above all, he cherished time spent with family and friends, always ready with a good joke, a hearty laugh, and a warm embrace.

Charles was deeply loved by his family. He married Barbara A. Brown, on November 30, 1963, at St. Lawrence Church in Laurel Springs, New Jersey. Together, they shared 62 wonderful years filled with countless cherished memories. He is survived by his devoted wife, Barbara Hess; his beloved children, Gregg (Sarah) Hess and Charlene (Todd) Hoffman; and his five treasured grandchildren, Christopher and Nicklaus Hess, and Ella, Cora, and Teigan Hoffman. Charles is also survived by his sisters, Carolyn (Nathan) Roush and Charlesanna "Kay" Sloan. He was preceded in death by his brother, Bill. Charles was fortunate to share a close friendship with his longtime fishing buddy, Gus Miles, and with Chris Holmes, with whom he spent many years volunteering at the Bridge Street Wedding Chapel in Grand Ledge, a place that brought him great joy and community.

A funeral mass for Charles will be held at St. Michael Catholic Church in Grand Ledge on Saturday, November 8, 2025 at 11am, immediately followed by a memorial gathering and luncheon at the Bridge Street Wedding Chapel, where family and friends will gather to celebrate his remarkable life and the legacy he leaves behind. Visitation will be one hour prior to the mass on Saturday at the church. You may watch the funeral mass for Charles at 11:00 am Saturday on the St. Michael Church YouTube channel at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/live/HBAOcLziYRA>. We invite those whose lives were touched by Charles to join in remembering his kindness, bravery, and dedication to both family and country.

Charles lived by a simple yet powerful set of principles: make wise choices, protect your reputation, and build relationships grounded in honesty and respect. He will be remembered for his warmth, his humor, and the love he so freely shared with others. His legacy of integrity, kindness, and loyalty will live on in the hearts of all who were fortunate to know him. The family requests that donations be made in Charles's memory to a charity of your choice,

reflecting his compassionate spirit.

He will be buried with full military honors at Ft. Custer National Cemetery in Battle Creek on Monday, November 10, 2025. Arrangements by the Holihan-Atkin-Barclay Funeral Home, Grand Ledge. Share your memories and condolences online at holihanatkin.com

Cemetery Details

Fort Custer National Cemetery

15501 Dickman Road
Augusta, MI 49012

Previous Events

Visitation

NOV 8. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Michael Catholic Church
345 Edwards Street
Grand Ledge, MI 48837

Funeral Mass

NOV 8. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

St. Michael Catholic Church
345 Edwards Street
Grand Ledge, MI 48837

Memorial Luncheon

NOV 8. 12:00 PM (ET)

Bridge Street Wedding Chapel
200 N. Bridge St.
Grand Ledge, MI 48837

Graveside Service with Military Honors

NOV **10**. 2:30 PM (ET)

Fort Custer National Cemetery
15501 Dickman Road
Augusta, MI 49012

Tribute Wall

CH

“ *Char lit a candle in memory of Charles Hess*



Char - November 15, 2025 at 08:28 PM

WT

“ *With love, Wendy (Moyes) & Todd, TC purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Charles Leroy Hess.*



With love, Wendy (Moyes) & Todd, TC - November 07, 2025 at 01:20 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Charles Leroy Hess.*



November 06, 2025 at 06:29 PM

LF

“ *Love the Visit Boulder Family purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Charles Leroy Hess.*



Love the Visit Boulder Family - November 06, 2025 at 05:04 PM

SA

“ *Sister Arlene purchased the Grand Meat & Cheese Gift Crate for the family of Charles Leroy Hess.*



Sister Arlene - November 05, 2025 at 11:05 AM

SN

“ *Sister Carolyn and nephews purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of Charles Leroy Hess.*



Sister Carolyn and nephews - November 05, 2025 at 10:36 AM

TZ

“ *I was very young when my Aunt Barbara brought this good looking uniformed gentleman home, her mother's home and my grandmothers home, in which I lived and grew up in. I remember a very tall stern looking fellow standing by a beautiful personable young lady, my Aunt Barbara. Love was in the air and there journey began. I was blessed to have witnessed this moment and the start of there love story. My thoughts and prayers are with my Aunt Barbara and cousins Charlene and Gregg today. We love you all, Tracey and Fred Zink*

Tracey Zink - November 04, 2025 at 06:03 PM

LS

“ I was his caregiver. But we were more than a business arraignment, we were friends. Hope you get all the good baseball cards up there chuck! I'll miss you
Lewis Sturgeon



Lewis Sturgeon - November 04, 2025 at 06:14 AM

LR

“ Love, Dennis & Karen, and Ronnie purchased the Vivid Recollections for the family of Charles Leroy Hess.



Love, Dennis & Karen, and Ronnie - November 03, 2025 at 08:06 PM

LR

“ Love, Dennis & Karen, and Ronnie planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Charles Leroy Hess.

Love, Dennis & Karen, and Ronnie - November 03, 2025 at 08:06 PM