



## Mary Lou Emelander

January 12, 1956 - April 18, 2026

Mary Lou Emelander of Eagle, Michigan, passed away on April 18, 2026, with her loving family by her side. Born on January 12, 1956, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, she was the beloved daughter of Oliver and Clarice (Kaufman) Shackelton, who preceded her in death.

After more than thirty years of dedicated service, Mary Lou retired from the State of Michigan Appellate Assigned Counsel System (MAACS). Her retirement didn't slow her down one bit! She kept busy working at Better Health, hanging out with friends, and traveling, which included an unforgettable Alaskan cruise. Mary Lou was also a martial arts enthusiast, having achieved an impressive 7th-degree black belt and teaching others the art of karate.

Creativity was another one of Mary Lou's strong suits. She was an amazing seamstress, crafting Halloween costumes and doll clothes for her granddaughters, Kayleeigh and Madison. Each birthday was a special occasion thanks to her homemade cakes, a delicious tradition that highlighted how much she cherished her family.

Mary Lou will be missed immensely, but her spirit will live on in the hearts of her daughter, Jennifer Cottom; her son-in-law, Aaron Cottom; her son, Jason Emelander; her sister-in-law, Margaret Shackelton; her nieces, Yvonne

Esakoff and Michelle Shackelton; her nephews, Mike (Nikki) Emelander and Dan (Christine) Emelander; her great niece and nephew, Ashley Shackelton and Liam Emelander and, of course, her cherished granddaughters. She was preceded in death by her husband, Thomas, and her brother, Jim Shackelton.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, May 23, 2026 at 12 Noon at the Hmong Christian Ministry, 2618 S. Waverly Highway, Lansing, Michigan 48911.

In lieu of flowers, the family welcomes donations to Second Chance Mushers (SCMR) P.O. Box 279, Eastport, Michigan 49627 (<https://bit.ly/4tnf7oF>) or Paws with a Cause, 4646 Division Avenue, Wayland, Michigan 49348 (<https://pawswithacause.org/donate/>) as a tribute to Mary Lou, whose loving spirit touched the lives of so many. We invite everyone who knew her to join us in celebrating her incredible life.

Arrangements by the Holihan-Atkin-Barclay Funeral Home, Grand Ledge.  
Share your memories and condolences online at [holihanatkin.com](http://holihanatkin.com).

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

MAY **23**. 12:00 PM (ET)

Hmong Christian Ministry  
2618 S. Waverly Highway  
Lansing, MI 48911

# Tribute Wall

AK

“ We've spent so many years enjoying Sanchin Ryu events together. From the fun times at Campout, SuperCamp and other events. SuperCamp was especially fun because we all got to work together to create a fun time for our kids. The last few years we've been having Sanchin ladies get togethers. I wish we'd done the one this spring sooner . . .



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**Alice Kalush** - April 21 at 08:57 PM

AK

“ 1 file added to the album Sanchin Ryu



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**Alice Kalush** - April 21 at 08:53 PM

RZ

“ Mary lou always had a smile and kindness to share with those around her. She will be missed. Heaven has another angel.

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**Ramon Zantello** - April 21 at 08:15 PM

LG

“ *Mary Lou touched many lives in such a gentle way, with her quiet, supportive guidance and encouragement to those around her. She was truly a genuine and sincere soul, and her loss is acutely felt. We are grateful to have shared her friendship. Our deepest sympathies to Jennifer, Jason, and family.*

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**Linda and Len Gonerka** - April 21 at 08:14 PM

“ *Master Mary Lou Emelander,*

*It is difficult to fully express the depth of gratitude and respect we hold for you—but what remains unmistakably clear is the way you lived your life. You did not simply teach Sanchin-Ryu... you were its living embodiment. Strength balanced with humility. Discipline grounded in compassion. A quiet, unwavering power guided by purpose and service.*

*As a Master Sensei, you led in a way that was both rare and profound. You never sought recognition—yet you earned the deepest respect. Every lesson you shared, every moment you invested, reflected your commitment to helping others grow—not only in skill, but in character. You gave of yourself fully, and because of that, your influence reaches far beyond what any of us can truly measure.*

*You touched countless lives. In the small moments—your words, your presence, your belief in others—you planted seeds that will continue to grow for generations. Many of us stand stronger today because you once stood beside us, guiding, encouraging, and believing.*

*Your legacy is not something that fades—it moves. It lives in the discipline you instilled, the confidence you inspired, and the integrity you modeled. The ripple of your life will continue to shape our community, and in turn, extend into the broader world, making it better because you were here.*

*We honor you by continuing forward with the values you lived so effortlessly—by lifting others, by standing with quiet strength, and by carrying your spirit into everything we do.*

*You were, and always will be, an inspiration.*

KK

“*Mary Lou was fun to work with in the Sanchin Ryu karate workshops and blackbelt classes, she always friendly and one of the many faces I could pick out in our big group.*”

Kathy Korman - April 21 at 05:26 PM

TF

“*Mary Lou was a rare and precious gift of a person. She was a talented master-level Sanchin-ka and Sensei, always so creative, gentle, and endlessly generous with her heart. She carried the love of Christ in everything she did, always making room for others before herself. Her life was a quiet, faithful testimony of grace and the world is more beautiful for the time she was in it. We love you, dear sister.*”

The Dearman Family - April 21 at 02:04 PM

TF

*We are saddened by the loss of this amazing woman. Her quiet grace, her inner strength, and her warm, loving heart have been a gift to all those fortunate enough to have known her. Our family had that privilege and she made our lives richer.*

*The world is a bit dimmer for her passing, but all of us shine just a bit brighter because of her. May we all bring that light to those around us in her honor.*

The Schrantz Family - April 21 at 05:57 PM



*While I didn't know Mary Lou long, she was a positive influence in my life, and selflessly shared her skills and knowledge with me. She will be missed.*

Ken Gocha - April 21 at 09:26 PM