

Dr. Michael Barcelona
April 20, 2022
Kalamazoo, MI



OBITUARY

Dr. Michael Joseph Barcelona, Mike, Mikey, Papa, Uncle Mike. 72, Kalamazoo, MI. He passed peacefully at home on Wednesday, April 20, 2022. Dr. Michael Joseph Barcelona was a son, brother, husband, father, father in-law, grandfather and uncle. He was a passionate and humble man, a true creative, a scientist, professor, mentor, activist, poet, music lover, hockey player, master meatball-maker, carpenter, captain planet, and comedian. He grew up with his Italian/Irish American parents Joe & Regina, the oldest of four, Janet, Guy and Russell in southside Chicago. He played street (and basement) hockey, wrestled on and off the mat, excelled in school, and served in the Catholic Church. He earned a scholarship to St Mary's College, where he earned a B.S. in Chemistry and attended Northeastern University in Boston for his masters on a full scholarship. He followed his love of the sea, and his wife, Esperanza, to the University of Puerto Rico to pursue his PHD in Marine Chemistry where he embraced Puerto Rican culture and learned Spanish and became a father to his first born, Veronica. Then, in Pasadena, California, he completed his post-doctorate at Caltech in Environmental Engineering where his second daughter, Jasmine, was born. He returned to Illinois, where his daughter Annette was born. He led the Water Chemistry Group at the State Water Survey, and co-founded the Illinois Hazardous Waste Research and Information Center. His passion for teaching, research and cleaning up the world's groundwater led him to a professorship at Western Michigan University where he was a distinguished faculty scholar. He educated and mentored students from across the globe, established and directed the Institute of Water Sciences, developed groundwater remediation techniques, and started a scholarship fund for students in need. You could also find him playing a lot of hockey and the saxophone, tinkering around on projects in the garage, playing professional air guitar, and cheering loudly at his daughters' basketball games, track meets, and ballet performances. Dr. Barcelona became a research scientist at The University of Michigan's Department of Environmental and Water Resources Engineering and directed the National Center for Integrated Bioremediation with the Department of Defense and United States EPA. He became a 'Nanu' to four grandchildren, Sofia,

Rocco, Marco and Luke, and continued cheering for the Bears, Blackhawks and occasionally the Red Wings. His briefcase contained pages of notes with genius in the margins, sketches of sites and squirrel prevention machines, poetry, gum, and ballpoint pens. For twenty years, Dr. Barcelona edited the Groundwater and Remediation Journal, received countless awards, and consulted water clean up efforts in the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East. Michael returned to Western Michigan as a professor and Department Chair of Chemistry and retired in 2017. At Western, he met and fell in love with his wife, Lynnette Abbate through their shared sense of humor, love of music, impromptu dancing, concerts and travel. He gained another grandson, Cristian, and stepsons Nick and William. He is survived by his wife, Lynnette Abbate, his daughters, Veronica, Jasmine, Annette, his son in laws Ryan Fox and Luke Knight, his grandchildren Sofia, Rocco, Marco, Luke and Cristian, his stepsons and Nicholas (Stephanie) and William, his siblings Janet Houseman, Guy (Janelle), Russell (Jenny). If you know Mike, and would like to celebrate his life, join us at Comensoli's Italian Bistro & Bar, 762 W Main St, Kalamazoo, MI, on Saturday, May 28th between 12pm-5pm. In lieu of flowers, the family is requesting donations to Western Michigan University's Michael Barcelona Scholarship Fund or The Periodic Table of Elements Wall at the Department of Chemistry. In retirement, he became active in the Rotary Club of Kalamazoo, served as president of the board of the Kalamazoo Ballet, became a Tuesday Toolmen building accessible ramps for underserved people in the community, and joined the Kalamazoo Literacy Council where he tutored adults to read and write. He loved reading, listening to music, Cartalk and NPR on the garage radio, Chicago PD, sharing stories and ideas to improve the world, and plastic flamingos. His legacy of passion and generosity lives on through his three daughters, his former students and colleagues, friends, family and all that were lucky enough to experience his intelligence, heart, soul and quirky sense of humor.