

Lake Koshkonong supporter recalled

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SUMNER — Friends and colleagues today were remembering the late Frank C. Micale as a generous man who had a passion for Lake Koshkonong and the surrounding natural environment.

Micale, 63, died Thursday at his North Shore home. A visitation will take place from 4 to 8 tonight at Dunlap Memorial Home in Fort Atkinson. A Celebration of Life will be held later this year.

“Frank’s heart has always been in Lake Koshkonong, and the entire Jefferson County area, to make it a better place for everybody,” said retired state Department of Natural Resources fisheries biologist Don Bush. “I don’t believe there was a selfish bone in his body.”

He noted that Frank’s passion for the lake led to him becoming instrumental in the development of the Rock River-Koshkonong Association and formation of the Rock-Koshkonong Lake District.

In addition, Frank was a partner in representing multiple organizations, including the Lake Koshkonong Recreation Association.

“It was in his blood,” Bush said. “The Micales were like the Camelot of Lake Koshkonong.”

Lake district Chairman Brian Christianson agreed, noting that Frank was a “founding father” of the RKLD, which formed in 1999. He served for several years on the district’s board.

“No one was more passionate in protecting and promoting Koshkonong,” Christianson said. “The rest of us could only hope to match Frank’s level of passion; we could not exceed it.”

Frank Micale Jr. was born on Jan. 8, 1952, in Milwaukee, to Frank C. Micale Sr. and Ione G. Micale. In November 1959, the family purchased Sunset Lodge Tavern (now Sunset Bar and Grill) on the north shore of Lake Koshkonong and relocated to the Town of Sumner.

The Micales owned and operated the popular tavern until the spring of 1993.



Frank Micale

Frank helped his family run the tavern from the time he was a teenager through its sale, and resided in the Micalé family home for the rest of his life. He and his mother owned and operated Sunset Shores cabins on Lake Koshkonong, renting to tourists and tenants alike.

“They always had an interest in what was going on on the lake and the river,” Bush said of the Micales. “It was part of the whole family. They really shared a kind of common mission when it came to improving conditions on the lake.”

Bush described Frank Jr. as being an important piece of the puzzle in terms of improvements on Lake Koshkonong and the Rock River, pointing out that Frank was active in whatever good cause was out there.

“He had the enthusiasm of a teenager and the passion of a southern preacher,” the retired biologist said, adding that Frank also had the ability to sway and motivate a crowd.

“It all came from the enthusiasm that he put into everything he believed in,” he said.

Bush acknowledged that he and Micalé were not always on the “same side of the table” on some issues. However, there always remained a mutual respect for one another and willingness to continue to work together to find a common ground, even when at odds.

“We shared the common goal of making the lake as good as it could be,” Bush said. “The means in getting there might have differed at times, but we kind of had a vision of what could be instead of what was.”

“He will definitely be missed as a partner in resource protection, as well as a good friend over the years,” Bush concluded.

Frank was a mainstay on North Shore, even after his parents sold the Sunset Bar and Grill.

“Frank was very involved and an all-around great guy,” current Sunset Bar and Grill owner Terri Grant added. “He always had a joke to tell.”

In addition to the Sunset, Frank was a frequent guest at the nearby Maasz’s North Shore Inn and the former Kemler’s Lamp.

“Everyone at North Shore will truly miss him,” North Shore Inn co-owner Mary Maasz said. “We always enjoyed seeing him. He was a very caring person and always worried about other people. He was always looking out for other people.”

Mary met Frank after she married Dwight Maasz, who had known Frank well over 40 years, both being in the restaurant business.

Both also worked for Jefferson County, Dwight as undersheriff and Frank as a Jefferson County Circuit Court bailiff for 27 years, as well as a special deputy for various events.

Mary said Frank and his girlfriend, Missy Defebaugh, were loyal supporters of the North Shore Inn and always nice to be around. One fond memory was Frank and Missy's participation in the restaurant's annual sing-a-long.

"We always looked forward to that," Mary said. "The first time I heard Frank sing, I couldn't believe that came out of his voice. It was amazing."

Frank was the lead male vocalist for Swingin' Company B, a 16-piece swing band that he co-founded with Defebaugh.

Across the street, Ken Kemler, owner of Ken & Betty's in Fort Atkinson and the Keystone Grill in Cambridge, recalls that Frank was one of the first people to welcome his family to Wisconsin when the Kemlers first moved to North Shore in 1987.

"We were neighbors — our houses both were on High Ridge Road," said Kemler, who owned and operated Kemler's Lamp on North Shore for 21 years until the restaurant and bar was destroyed by the flood of 2008. "Both (homes) were within walking distances of our places of work."

While living there, he said, his family frequently would walk nearly across the street to the Micales' Sunset Lodge Tavern to enjoy their homemade pizzas.

"He (Frank) seemed so comfortable there (at Sunset Lodge) — there was no one he was uncomfortable talking with," Kemler said. "He was exuberant, and always took time to talk with everybody ... he seemed happy to see them (customers.) He was a good guy and will be missed by a lot of people."

And Frank, likewise, often would drop by Kemler's Lamp for a bite to eat.

"Frank and his buddy, Randy LeVake, were two of the first people to come in and welcome us to the neighborhood," Kemler said of his family. "And they were regulars at our place (Kemler's Lamp)."

Frank and his brother, Mike, and Mike's wife, Teresa ("Terri"), also were frequent customers at Kemler's Lamp, he said.

"They (Micales) were good customers of ours, and pretty good friends over the years," Kemler commented. "They were always a big help to my business. They were never afraid to send business our way. We still are good friends with Mike and Terri."

One activity that proved popular along the North Shore years ago, he recalled, was when the neighborhood children went trick-or-treating on Halloween.

"Frank and Randy, and Frank's brother, Mike, would take the kids trick-or-treating in a riding lawnmower or small tractor pulling a big trailer behind," Kemler shared. "That trick-or-treating thing was a big deal. It told me how big and close-connected the neighborhood out there was."

He recalled that Frank always had good advice to offer others, particularly when it came to improving

Lake Koshkonong.

“He was active in developing the Rock-Koshkonong Lake District to improve the lake,” Kemler said. “He helped organize the fisherees and helped bring that (fishing) business to the lake. He also helped different organizations work together well.”

Another activity that Frank helped establish, he said, was Carparama, a carp-seining event — sponsored by a local archery club — that ran for three years and helped improve the lake’s water quality.

“They (fishermen) took out over 10,000 pounds of carp (from the lake) on the first one,” Kemler said. “They had a dump truck, and boats emptied their carp into the dump truck. The fish were converted into fertilizer, which then was plowed under the fields.”

A carp shoot that Micale helped organize, he said, also attempted to bring back some of the sport fishing and rid Lake Koshkonong of carp.

“He (Frank) was president of the Rock River-Koshkonong Association (RRKA) for so many years, and then instrumental in getting the lake district going and improving the lake in that way,” Kemler concluded. “Even after he left Sunset (Lodge Tavern), he still was active with the lake.”

At the time of his death, Frank was serving as Supervisor II on the Town of Sumner Board of Supervisors. He had served eight years as a supervisor since 2007 and was up for re-election in April.

Living in Sumner for nearly his entire life, Frank was considered extremely knowledgeable on the issues in the town and even the surrounding area.

“I liked to refer to him as one of the mayors of North Shore,” Sumner Chairperson John Dohner Jr. said.

Of Frank’s many years of service on the town board, Dohner said, his help following the 2008 flood stands out most.

Dohner said Frank was an instrumental player in helping the town gain Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) coverage following the flood.

With Micale’s help, the town received about \$400,000 to fix the town roads that were damaged by the flood and unable to be fixed with the Sumner’s small budget.

“That was a pretty big deal for the township,” he added. “When you’re dealing with a small budget, that’s a pretty big deal.”

Dohner and Frank served on the Town of Sumer board together since Dohner joined in 2009.

“He was a really great asset to the board and we’re really going to miss him,” Dohner said. “Those are some pretty large shoes to fill.”

Sumner Town Clerk Glendan Rewoldt agreed.

“Frank was dedicated and committed to his public service in the town and wore many hats as a supervisor,” Rewoldt said.

In addition to making decisions for the betterment of the town, Frank was the delegated Summer representative to the Fort Atkinson Fire Department and the Rock-Koshkonong Lake District.

Frank kept the town up to date on the activities and endeavors of both of these organizations and departments, Rewoldt said.

“The town is grateful and appreciative of Frank’s input, leadership and his example as a team player,” she added. “Frank’s intentions and purpose were for the best interest of the people he represented. Frank will be fondly missed.”