



Martin Leo Saper

East Lansing

Before the U.S. entered WWI, Martin Saper was born in Jackson, Michigan, November 28, 1916, to a Russian émigré, Isaac Saper, and Rosella (Rosenberg) Saper, the daughter of Romanian emigrants.

In the early 1930s he was an acrobat in the Lewis Brothers 3-ring circus that toured the eastern U.S. At Jackson Junior College (1935-37) he played violin in the orchestra, performed in theater productions, was on the basketball team, played intramural sports and was in the Men's Club.

Martin graduated from Michigan State College in 1941 with his B.S. in mechanical engineering. His lifelong membership in the American Society of Mechanical Engineers started then. At Michigan State he was active with Hillel and played in the orchestra.

His first job was designing gauges for the manufacture of machine guns at Detroit Ordnance.

While attending religious services in Jackson, May 23, 1941, Martin met New Yorker Thelma Cardon and they married in New York, February 23, 1942.

Still newlyweds, Martin enlisted in the Army Air Force July 10, 1942, receiving his commission as an Engineering Maintenance Officer on his 26th birthday, November 28, 1942. He served in the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater during WWII, having responsibility for all survival equipment and materiel, returned home as a Captain January 2, 1946, and continued to serve in the reserves until May 1955.

After the War, Martin settled in Ann Arbor where, for Physicists Research Company, he designed an industrial measuring device that was successfully patented.

From 1948 to 1955 he engineered and managed numerous pipeline projects for Jackson-based Gentry Pipeline Construction Co., piloting the owner's plane to worksites around the country and designing a boring machine marketed to the oil and gas industry. In Jackson he designed and built his first home and furniture, using skills learned from his father, a finish carpenter.

In 1953 and 1954 he also was in partnership with his brother, operating Bonafide Concrete Company in Jackson.

In 1954 he moved to Flint where (from 1955 to 1966) he designed, built and operated the three Top Hat Auto Wash-

es, working seven days a week, managing 135 employees, yet managing to be home for a family dinner every night at 6:30pm. He served as president of two investment companies during this same period. In Flint he was an active supporter of the Flint Institute of Arts and cultural community, PTA president, and involved Kiwanian. He visited elementary schools presenting programs on his WWII experience in India.

In 1966 at age 49, Martin retired, but soon moved his family to Louisville, Kentucky to direct operations for Industrial Services of America, a large seven-state solid waste hauling business. He designed and constructed a large industrial recycling plant there and, in 1970, retired a second time. In Louisville he was very active with the Speed Art Museum, local theater, helping form a new Jewish congregation, and volunteering for a senior citizen's program.

Martin produced the largest reunion of CBI WWII veterans at a convention in Louisville. He was recognized by President Clinton at the White House for his activities strengthening veterans employment opportunities and was named Veteran Advocate of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration in 1995.

After his second retirement he created Bilt-Rite Construction Company, building homes in Southern Indiana; Venture Development Company, developing subdivisions; and Adventure, a business building in-ground swimming pools. He retired a third time on his 65th birthday in 1981.

In 1991 he moved to East Lansing where he continued his service as the Small Business Administration National Director of Veteran's Affairs for SCORE (the Service Corps of Retired Executives), and served as a mentor counseling entrepreneurs starting or expanding their business. The Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce recognized him with its Small Business Advocate of the Year award in 2001 for his dedication and service to entrepreneurs and those in business seeking counseling. His office was decorated with numerous awards and commendations for his service to veterans and other organizations.

After a full life of 100 years, Martin died March 27, 2017 due to heart failure, with his family at his side. Throughout his life, Martin went to "the gym" about daily to exercise and stay fit, while enjoying occasional dark chocolate and ice cream treats.

He was predeceased by his wife, Thelma, who died May 6, 2014, sons Craig (1974) and Jerold (1975) and his brothers, Victor (2005) and James (1920).

Martin is survived by sons Brian (Belmont, MA), Roy (East Lansing, MI) and his wife Nell Kuhnmuensch and their sons Adam (Miami Beach) and Jay (Brooklyn, NY), and Paul (Austin, TX) and his wife Jeri and their sons Jake (San Francisco) and Craig (New York, NY).

With his wife, Thelma, Martin hosted many events for social organizations and veterans organizations and was proactive in welcoming newcomers at religious services and other events. He took on leadership roles in his service to the country, for his employers, in the religious community and other organizations wherever he lived, and provided benefits to his employees who were dedicated to working for him. Martin was a friend to all who knew him.

He and Thelma enjoyed their travels around the world and especially cruise excursions, particularly those where the family joined them. His most recent trip was in June 2016 when he was on the Mid-Michigan Honor Flight with other WWII veterans to Washington D.C. to visit war and service monuments and memorials.

Although he raised his five boys with strict rules and expectations, he encouraged and assisted them in their various business ventures and extra-curricular activities as teens, put them through college, and made time to visit the family as it dispersed and grew.

In business and in service to his country and others, he was dedicated, resourceful, reliable, responsible, industrious, inventive, and creative. To those who knew him, he was welcoming, accepting, respectful, kind, thoughtful, and generous.

He loved his family and many friends who were with him throughout his full and rewarding life of achievement and service.

A funeral service will be held at noon, Tuesday, March 28, 2017, at Congregation Shaarey Zedek, 1924 Coolidge Rd., East Lansing, MI, with Rabbi Amy B. Bigman and Cantor Pamela Schiffer officiating. The family will welcome visitors at Shaarey Zedek between 11 am and noon. Burial will follow the service at Temple Beth Israel Cemetery in Jackson, Michigan. The family will also receive visitors at Roy Saper's home, 812 Applegate Lane, East Lansing, Tuesday, March 28 from 7 to 9 p.m.

Instead of flowers, the family would suggest giving time to benefit an older friend, relative, or veteran, and remembering the value and wisdom of the elderly and the gifts that their years have given to many.

A video of the funeral is at this link: <https://venue.streamspot.com/video/c972f9a3fc> Advance the scroll bar to 7:50.

Rabbi comments at 13:15, Brian at 14:25, Paul at 25:40, Roy at 35:30

Obituary also at sapergalleries.com/MartinSaperObit.pdf

Martin Leo Saper -- Remembering the Life

November 28, 1916 – March 27, 2017



Congregation Shaarey Zedek, East Lansing, Michigan

March 28, 2017

Officiating

Rabbi Amy Bigman Cantor Pamela Schiffer

Eulogy

Brian Stuart Saper Roy Cardon Saper Paul Martin Saper

Sons

Honor Guard Service and Presentation of the Flag (outdoors)

VFW 671, DeWitt, Michigan

Pall Bearers

Nell Kuhnmuench (Saper) Daughters-in-law

Jeri Rosen Saper

Adam Cardon Saper Grandsons

Jay Austin Saper

Mourners

Brian Stuart Saper Roy Cardon Saper Paul Martin Saper

Burial at Temple Beth Israel Cemetery, Jackson, Michigan

38 miles south on US-127, left on Wildwood, immediate left on Carr to end

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After the War, Martin and Thelma began their family that would grow to five sons: Jerold (d. 1975), Brian (Belmont, MA), Roy (East Lansing, wife Nell Kuhnmuensch and sons Adam and Jay), Craig (d. 1974), and Paul (Austin, TX, wife Jeri and sons Jacob and Craig). Martin actively participated in all the communities they called home: Ann Arbor, Flint, Jackson, Louisville, and East Lansing.

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