

Member Profile

This week's feature: **Larry Nickel**



Larry was born in Cleveland and raised in Lakewood. There were three kids in the family, Larry, Dean, and Deanna, who is also a member of Prince of Peace Church. There will be more on Deanna in the next Profile. Dean became a doctor, but has passed away.

Larry was in the Lakewood School System through high school. He then went on to Capital University, just outside of Columbus, OH, and majored in Biology, with minors in Education and ROTC. It was at Capital that Larry was to meet beautiful Claudia. They were in the same German Class, and Claudia would secretly wait for Larry so she could walk to class with him. They were married in their senior year. After College, Larry followed up his ROTC with a four-year commitment in the Air Force. First three months in San Antonio, TX, then in Hamilton AFB in California, and finally over-seas on the Isle of Crete in the Mediterranean Sea. He was a First Lieutenant working in security as a Top-Secret Control Officer. I asked him what he did, but he said that if he told me, he would have to, well, that's another story. Claudia didn't travel to Crete with Larry, and their first child was born while he was away.

After the Air Force, Larry got a job teaching and coaching in the Cincinnati area at Mount Healthy High School. Larry has always been active in sports, whether as a high school football quarterback, or as a high school coach. He got his MS in Education at the University of Cincinnati during the 3-4 years they spent there. The family returned to the Cleveland area, and Larry took a job at Westlake High School. He taught Biology and was a Counselor as well as a coach. He coached football, and was the head Track Coach for 27 years. When he retired there was a Larry Nickel Day. What a wonderful tribute!

Larry and Claudia had two children, Laurie, the oldest, is a social worker, and lives in Westerville, OH with her husband, Kevin, who is a retired teacher and a Travel Guide. They have two children, Katie and Jacob, who are both teachers. Their son, Randy, who

was a top wrestler at Bay High School, has a master's degree in Theology and served on the Young Life staff for 31 years in the Cleveland Area. He currently serves in various churches and mission roles, primarily in Scotland. He is an excellent speaker and preacher. His wife, Martha is a nurse at St Vincent Hospital. They have three boys and a beautiful adopted daughter, Joy, who is from Kenya and is 16 years old.

Sadly, Larry's wife, Claudia, contracted ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, a malady that affects the nervous system and continually weakens the muscles. As Claudia grew weaker and weaker, Larry became a full-time care taker. There is no cure, and Claudia lost this long, long fight.

Beside sports, Larry loves to garden. Walking into his back yard is like walking into a beautiful English Garden, complete with many flowers and a waterfall. Many may not know that Larry is also a very talented artist. Although he has painted in a number of different media, he currently uses acrylic on very smooth Masonite, which allows for fine detail. He has completed more than 50 paintings, and many look as if you are right in the picture with their fine detail and three dimensional appearance. He has been featured in art shows, but he doesn't sell his paintings, preferring to keep them for his children and grandchildren. One painting is of the family's old homestead house in Oak Harbor, which is 30 east of Toledo, OH; he has made many copies for family members.

Larry was a long-time member of Bethesda Lutheran Church in Bay Village, but transferred to POP where sister, Deanna, was already a member. What a wonderful afternoon I had talking to this very humble man, and seeing his many crafts, paintings and awards. If you have not met Larry, you are missing one of the most amazing people that I know. You will love him.

By Dick Hardy, Profile Reporter

