

Ferdinand A. Ermlich

May 20, 1935-July 1, 1999

COOPERSTOWN, NY -- Ferdinand (Fred) A. Ermlich, 64, of Fork Shop Road in Cooperstown, died Thursday morning, July 1, 1999 at Bassett Hospital in Cooperstown.

He was born on May 20, 1935 on Long Island, a son of Fred G. Ermlich and Lillian Ermlich Butler. He married Gwendolyn Coleman on Nov. 25, 1972 at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Cooperstown.

Mr. Ermlich was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest in 1962 and received his M.A. from St. Bonaventure University in 1965. He was chaplain at Albany State University, served as priest at St. Mary's in Oneonta and in campus ministry at SUNY Oneonta. He also enjoyed the privilege of celebrating Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City and at the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Italy. He resigned from active ministry in 1970, but was active as a Cantor and served as a leader of RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) at St. Mary's in Cooperstown.

After leaving the priesthood, Mr. Ermlich was appointed ombudsman at SUNY Oneonta, a position he held for 18 years. He also served as assistant to the academic vice president and was acting director of academic advisement. He retired from the college in 1995 as associate dean of continuing education. At the time of his death, Mr. Ermlich was president of the Retired Faculty Association. He served as president of the National Ombudsman Association and was a board member of the University and College Ombudsman Association from 1987-89 and served as its president from 1991-92.

Through a shared love of opera, Mr. and Mrs. Ermlich became founding members of the Glimmerglass Opera Theater in Cooperstown. Mr. Ermlich was a founding trustee and chief fiscal officer/board treasurer for the Opera and wrote successful grant proposals on the Opera's behalf to the National Foundation for the Arts, among others, for its first 13 years of operation. Mr. Ermlich sang in the professional chorus at Glimmerglass in more than 250 performances over the last 24 years. He also sang in the Community Chorale (now the Catskill Choral Society in Oneonta.)

He was founding president of the New York State Bed and Breakfast Association. With his wife, Gwen, he was "Chef Extraordinaire" and co-proprietor at Creekside Bed and Breakfast, featured in *Travel and Leisure* and *Country Inns* magazines. In its 16 years of operation, Creekside's reputation was built on Fred and Gwen's personal rapport and warmth, where guests became part of their extended family.

He was a founding member of the Public Employees Relations Board (PERB) and the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR). Mr. Ermlich was a founding member of OURS, a Catholic Charity responsible for the creation of shelters for battered women and rape crisis centers, from 1976 to 1984, and president of its Board of Directors from 1982-84. He was co-founder with Yonah Alexander of the SUNY Institute for Studies on International Terrorism and a panel participant and guest speaker in the nation's capital and across the country.

If there was a unifying thread through all of Fred's life, it was his orientation as a peacemaker. He was the recipient of many awards and honors for his work across all his fields of interest. Fred was noted for his love of people and his God and was one of the most beloved members of his community.

Fred is survived by:

- his loving wife of 27 years, Gwen;
- sons F. Paul Ermlich and wife Hiroko of Cambridge, Mass.
- and Patrick P. Ermlich of Cooperstown;
- stepson, Frank B. Coleman IV and wife Pearl of Boston, Mass.; granddaughter, Julia Coleman;
- beloved mother-in-law, Beryl Zachary of Cooperstown;
- sisters, Maryann Winterstein and her husband Henry of Camillus and Ruth Ermlich of Mount Vernon, Ohio;
- foster brother, James Wallace of Mount Vernon, Ohio;
- brothers-in-law, Charles Zachary of Oneonta and Ronald Agee of Newport News, Va.;
- sister-in-law, Annlee Skinner and her husband George of Newport News, Va.;
- many beloved nieces, nephews and cousins, both in the United States and Germany
- and a legion of devoted friends and colleagues.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at 2 p.m. on Monday, July 5, 1999 at St. Mary's Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church in Cooperstown with the Reverend John R. Roos, pastor and Father S. Tita co-officiating. Committal services and burial followed in Fly Creek Valley Cemetery.

A tremendous outpouring of love and respect was paid to Fred and his family during the calling hours on Sunday, July 4, 1999 from 1:30-6:30 in the afternoon at the Connell, Dow and Deysenroth Funeral Home, 82 Chestnut St., Cooperstown, NY. A true testament to the impact Fred had on the community was exhibited by the line of people who were present for the wake. The line stretched through four rooms of the Funeral Home, outside, and down along Chestnut Street, creating an over three-hour wait. The family was deeply moved by the overwhelming amount of people who were on hand to pay their respects to Fred and comfort them.

In lieu of flowers, expressions of sympathy can be made in memory of Fred to Glimmerglass Opera, P.O. Box 191, Cooperstown, N.Y. 13326-0191.