

OBITUARIES

Vincent E. Barsch, 91, New Berlin

NEW BERLIN — “It’s been a good life.” These were the frequently uttered words that now echo at the empty kitchen table where Vincent E. Barsch, recently of New Berlin, shared countless holidays, meals and reminiscences with his adoptive family of close friends. Vincent passed away on the morning of Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2010, at RiverWoods in Lewisburg in the company of his caretakers. He was 91 years old.



V. Barsch

Born Eugene Aloysius Barsch on March 24, 1919, in St. Joseph, Mo., Vincent was the son of steelworker Aloysius Barsch and his seamstress wife, Emelie Trier Barsch. He was preceded in death by his wife, Marian, and by his sister, Virginia Barsch.

Six-foot-three and as lean as one of the edible weeds that he delighted in plucking from his garden, Vincent bore the chiseled German features of his immigrant grandparents and a spirit that led him first to the Benedictine Order and later, on May 10, 1945, to the priesthood. Adopting the name Vincent, he proceeded to serve in various Catholic parishes and missions in Missouri, South Dakota and North Dakota, a journey that sparked his desire to passionately advocate for the rights of the disenfranchised. His advocacy work with the mentally retarded inspired Vincent to leave the priesthood in 1973 in order to undertake a move to Pennsylvania, where he served for 16 years as a psychologist at the Selinsgrove Center.

Even after his tenure as a priest, Vincent kept his Heavenly Father at the forefront of his daily life, maintaining a close relationship with Conception Abbey in Conception, Mo., regularly attending services at St. Pius X Roman Catholic Church in Selinsgrove and sharing knitted bits of scholarly and religious wisdom with those fortunate enough to be available to listen. Contentment was his consistent theme, and for Vincent, it came in everything from the fresh rhubarb — sage-green and tinged with pink — that sprouted in his backyard to the yoga headstands that he practiced at age 90. Vincent was a master gardener and cultivated dahlias, daffodils and inner peace at

every opportunity.

An avid traveler, Vincent found new evidence of the world’s wonders in destinations from Anchorage, Alaska, to Christchurch, New Zealand. In the former Soviet Union, he and his wife befriended their young tour guide and ultimately assisted in her immigration to the United States. Beloved by Vincent as his Russian daughter, Elena is now a college professor in Iowa.

For Vincent, however, his New Berlin home was always the perfect place in which to set his generous spirit free — even if it didn’t have much room to roam. A pack rat by nature, Vincent gifted generously to charities and missions while simultaneously hoarding National Geographics, tucking away his first pair of socks from boyhood and storing remnants of a lifetime’s worth of torn shoestrings. He savored every available bite of food and still feasted on his mother’s homemade ketchup and home-brewed beer even 30 years after her death. To Vincent, everything provided was a gift worthy of safekeeping and of gratitude — for each, in some way, sustained his life.

Perhaps this is how we live to 91.

It was a good life, Vince.

Vincent is survived by no immediate family. He was an adopted member of the John and Nancy Showers family, of New Berlin, and was compassionately cared for in recent years by Mel Romig, of Mifflinburg, for whose dedicated care Vincent was grateful.

A viewing will be held from 4 to 5 p.m. Tuesday at St. Pius X Roman Catholic Church, 112 Fairview Drive, Selinsgrove. A Mass of Christian burial will be celebrated at 5 with the Rev. Edward J. Keating as celebrant. Following the Mass, one last dinner gathering in honor of Vince will be held at the home of John and Nancy Showers, 317 Vine St., New Berlin. All of Vince’s family of friends are invited to attend.

A later burial of the remains will take place in Meadville and at Conception Abbey in Conception, Mo.

Donations in memory of Vincent Barsch may be made to the New Berlin Heritage Association, P.O. Box 223, New Berlin, PA 17855.

Arrangements are by the Schwartz-Adamo Funeral and Cremation Services, Mifflinburg.