



## In Memory of

Morris G. (Moe) Snider

**Marysville, Michigan**

February 9th 2011

**Brockville, ON**

July 1st 1923



**SNIDER....**Morris G. "Moe" ... Marysville, Michigan, 87, passed away unexpectedly of natural causes in his residence on Wednesday, February 09, 2011. He was born to George and Eva Snider on July 1, 1923 in Brockville, Ontario As a young man living in Kingston, Ont. Morris became interested in the theater business and worked at both the Grand and Capital Theaters in Kingston. In the mid 1940s he became the House Manager at the Capital Theater in Hamilton, Ont. He married Lumina Gareau on July 23, 1946 in Hamilton, and in 1948 he and Lumina moved to Pembroke, Ont. where he took a job as theater manager. In 1950 he became Arena Manager for the newly constructed Pembroke Memorial Centre where he brought many stage shows and junior hockey to the arena. He later took arena manager jobs in North Bay and Pembroke before moving to Port Huron in 1966 to manage the McMorrان Complex for three decades. Morris was also general manager of the International Hockey League Port Huron Flags from 1970 to 1981 and the team won two Turner Cups. During that time, he was Governor of the IHL in 1971,

First Vice President in 1972, and he received the Andy Mulligan "Executive of the Year" award following the 1975-76 season. He was also a moving force behind high school hockey, the Port Huron Minor Hockey Assn., and the Port Huron Figure Skating Club. After Morris' retirement from McMorrان, he assisted at Smith Family Funeral Home for the past 13 years. Morris is survived by his wife of over 64 years, Lumina Snider, his three daughters, Marlene (Robert) Valdez of Fort Gratiot, Merla (Craig) Newton of Lake, MI, and Phyllis Grant of Fort Gratiot; and his seven grandchildren, Robert Valdez, Jenny Valdez, Kimberly (Mike) Wood, Kathryn and Daniel Newton, Melissa Johnston, and Courtney Grant, 2 great-grandchildren, Jaylynn Postilla and Olivia Woodard, and a son-in-law, John.

He was preceded in death by his daughter, Karen Johnston, on February 28, 2002. Visitation Friday, February 11, 2011 in Smith Family Funeral Home-North, 1525 Hancock St. from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The funeral mass was celebrated at 10:00 a.m. Saturday in Holy Trinity Parish's St. Stephen Catholic Church preceded by one hour of visitation. The Rev. Fr. Brian Cokonougher will officiate. Burial will follow in Mt. Hope Cemetery. Pallbearers will be Jim Bannatyne, Lloyd Maxfield, Larry Gould, Ray Germain, Gordie Redden, and Mike McDougal. Honorary pallbearers will be Bill and Leo Deligianis, Dave Montross, Ron Saffee, Cliff Friedland, Bobby McCammon, Bob Hines, Larry Krabach, Robert Valdez, Danny Newton, Mike Woodard, Cliff Schrader, and Mike Emrick. Contributions may be made in Morris's memory to the Blue Water Area Humane Society.

The Alumni family lost a wonderful caring friend...with the passing of Morris Snider...a tremendous supporter in so many ways.. always at the forefront.. to step forward to help.. every news media in Port Huron announced the passing.. as the man at the helm of McMorran Place for three decades and now the hole in the hearts of his friends and the community..the gentleman....who helped a lot of people behind the scenes.. that no one ever knew about... he loved Port Huron... described over and over again..as a friend of the people and one who always preferred to do the right thing...he was a very, very nice guy... Those of us who knew him best understand what we have lost....The Alumni extends its deepest heart felt condolences to the entire Snider family.. he will always be missed...BUT never forgotten...

Boy did Snider have friends!!!..and he loved them all...Lynn Hines his former administrative director, worked with him for 26 years and agreed he was a great boss. *"He was very fair with everybody," she said. "We were like a family working together at McMorran".* ....Snider's former Assistant Manager Larry Krabach... doesn't believe Morris would want to be remembered for the decades of service at McMorran. *"Those kinds of things happened".. said Krabach, who worked with Snider for 24 years. "I just think he liked to be a friend of people and do the right thing. He was a very nice guy. He was very gentle, a great, great boss.. pretty much a great guy to work for"..* admitted the former Assistant Manager..

Ron Saffee, owner of the former Saffee's Restaurant, knew Snider for 47 years, met him shortly after he came to Port Huron. He often ate at Saffee's.... *"Morris was everything you'd want in a man".. Saffee said. "I could write a book on that guy. We were very, very close....The man was dedicated to service. He helped a lot of people in this town. He really did a lot of good. He loved the town. He was always for the downtown, always working hard for it. ....He was always there for the little guy and trying to promote the downtown....Snider was the mayor of Huron Avenue to every merchant on the street"..he said. "He knew everything that was going on in this city."....*

Not so long ago Snider was enjoying lunch with several friends..he leaned forward and in a soft voice...asked for a favor..perhaps with a sense that life always is way too short no matter your age.. *"I have never been very good at writing, so I would like you to help me write my obituary"..* and told it would be an honour.. Then in our way of dealing with such serious matters..it was pointed out the old adage.. *only the good die young.* So what was Morris worried about... Snider laughed and said he truly had lived a long and blessed life...He shared 64 of his 87 years with his love Lumina, their children and grandchildren....

In 1996 Morris was 72. And 53 years in the business. He called it a career. More than 500 people gathered at McMorran Place for what had to be the largest retirement party in Port Huron's history. In attendance were large numbers from the hockey world, some traveling thousands of miles to be there. Moe delivered the longest goodbye speech ever...He believed he was chosen to be the protector of the McMorran family's legacy.

On July 1st 1966 ... Snider's first day on the job as the General Manager and by coincidence his 43rd birthday... Morris was greeted by three visitors....He recalls the first representing the Port Huron Figure Skating Club, announcing that the cash-strapped organization would be folding....The next appointment was with the promoter of a monthly concert series, who said his group couldn't turn a profit and was going out the business....The third visitor was the GM of the Port Huron Flags, which had just won the Turner Cup as champions of the International Hockey League. The GM told Snider he was quitting for a new job. *"He said, I haven't told team co-owner John Wismer that I'm leaving"...* *"I nearly went back to North Bay right then"...* It was an inauspicious beginning, but perhaps an appropriate one. There was always something to fix at McMorran Place...Snider couldn't save the concert series, but found a way to rescue the figure-skating club. As for the Flags, he eventually would manage the club for a dozen seasons, winning two more Turner Cups.

Morris stayed on as McMorran's top executive for three decades, stepping down a day before his 73rd birthday in 1996. He was nearing the moment when he would have lived in the United States precisely as long as he lived in his native land.... Chatting about his long career, his thoughts on the future of McMorran Place and other topics, including his friendship with the late entertainer Liberace.

Born on Canada Day in 1923, Morris George "Moe" Snider spent his childhood in Eastern Ontario towns of Brockville, Delta and Seeley's Bay.....He was 12 when his family moved to Kingston, where the St. Lawrence River emerges from Lake Ontario. As a schoolboy, he took a job at a local theatre for \$8 a week...This was the golden age of movie houses, an era when uniformed ushers, doormen, counter workers and cashiers would form ranks for inspection before the evening's first curtain....When Snider smiled, it was not hard to imagine the face of the bright, eager boy who would quit school and work his way up the ranks .. usher, doorman, assistant manager.. to become the youngest house manager in the Odeon Theatres chain....Another promotion took him to Hamilton, as house manager of the 5,000-seat Capitol Theatre.... *"It was as big as the Fox Theatre in Detroit"*. said Morris.

In the summer of 1946, Snider married Lumina Gareau, a native of Kapuskasing. *"She was a French girl who spoke very little English and if I do say so myself, she was quite attractive"*..Snider said with a wink....When Morris asked for permission to take the day off for his wedding, his immediate supervisor replied: *"The Catholic church marries people in the morning. I expect you at work at the usual time"....* And so he spent his wedding night on the job. *"I decided then and there, I was getting out of the theatre business...TV was ruining the business in any event."*

Over the years, his bride would master English and then some. *"He would kid Lumina that she's read every book in the libraries of Kingston, Pembroke, North Bay and Port Huron".....*Moe and Lou would have four daughters. The family had grown to include a dozen grandchildren and two great-grandchildren...Looking back, Snider was quick to admit.. *"I always put my work first, and I shouldn't have. My wife raised our girls. It's my only regret."*

He kept his vow, quit his job in Hamilton and returned to Kingston where he went to work as a salesman for a meat-packing company....While on a sales trip, he bumped into an acquaintance who told him about a job managing a theatre in Pembroke....He broke his vow and signed on for \$7,500 a year plus a percentage of the gate. The deal paid off with the premiere of *"The Boy with Green Hair,"* a 1948 movie starring 12-year-old Dean Stockwell as a war orphan...To promote the movie, Snider promised \$75 worth of school books for the boy who arrived at the theatre with the greenest hair.... *"The school board went nuts. We got calls from teachers and caught hell from the newspaper, but we packed the house,"* he says. *"I made myself a nice chunk of money, and the company loved it"....* In the early 1950s, he became Manager of Pembroke's newly constructed 4,000-seat hockey arena. *"Built with volunteer labor... it was a beautiful facility"...*

Opening night the president of the National Hockey League and other dignitaries gathered to watch the Pembroke Lumber Kings play an exhibition with the Montreal Canadiens. The way Snider tells the story, the announcer greeted the crowd with the words: "***This is one of the brightest days in the history of the City of Pembroke***". At that exact moment, the lights went out, leaving 4,000 people in the dark. An electrician finally restored power by taping a hockey stick to the main fuse and assigning a broad-shouldered lad to hold it in place. Snider learned the ropes of arena management in Pembroke, where his love of country music helped fill the seats. He made regular booking trips to Nashville, where he befriended stars such as Hank Snow, Loretta Lynn, Tammy Wynette and Johnny Cash. He also bought into a country band, Irwin Prescott and the Mell-O-Tones, and began performing a comedy skit as "***Little Moe***", a besotted rube dressed in beard, wig and floppy hat. "*His mother came to the show one night..she looked at my wife and said, who is that fool??. ..She didn't know.*"

Snider also managed the Lumber Kings and began developing strong connections in hockey circles. He would continue both roles... hockey and arena management ...In 1956 when he moved to North Bay on the shores of Lake Nipissing. He remained in North Bay for a decade, before accepting the job as McMorrans's General Manager. He made the move to Port Huron even after the Mayor of North Bay offered to match the \$1,000-a-month salary. "*It was an easy decision..Snider wanted to go to the States. And quite frankly, he was tired of managing a hockey club*"...The real selling point was the McMorrans Place with its lovely theatre, dual hockey venues and the 150-foot observation tower. Built in stages between 1957 and 1965... it was a splendid facility.

"*It was world class for that day and age*". Snider would say. "*For years, we had visitors from cities all across the country coming to see our facility. There wasn't a month go by without people asking to tour it.*" Those who looked closely saw a major blemish .. the main arena had been designed for basketball.. not hockey. And that was a problem.

Ten days before Morris took over as General Manager... the man who hired him died. Murphy was the son-in-law and business partner of Henry McMorrans, the former congressman, whose name graces the complex. "*Snider met the man on three occasions,..but he made his wishes clear. He was someone who spoke his mind... yet maintaining strictness, fairness and integrity*".

Murphy married McMorrans's daughter. In 1953, a solid majority of Port Huron voters approved a proposal to build a civic auditorium at the site where fire had destroyed City Hall four years earlier. A majority wasn't good enough. In those days, Michigan communities could take on public debt only if a 60% plurality of voters gave their blessings. The Port Huron proposal fell just short of that threshold. The McMorrans Foundation, set up in 1955 by Andrew J. Murphy, his wife Emma McMorrans and her sister Clara McMorrans Mackenzie. They offered a gift of \$1.2 million to build a municipal auditorium in downtown Port Huron. The building opened in 1960. They believed Port Huron deserved a first-class theatre. "*Emma was a great one for the arts,*" noted Snider. Sadly, neither daughter lived to see McMorrans Place open. Clara passed away in 1958. Emma died on January 9th 1960, the day the curtain rose for the first time at the 1,157-seat theatre. Emma helped to prepare the theatre for the gala opening.. she went home to rest before the big evening. Her husband found her dead in her favorite rocking chair..."*It was a real tragedy*".. exclaimed Snider.. "*it would have been her big night*"....

Murphy built the observation tower as a memorial to his wife. The Blue Water Bridge is the only structure in the city taller than the 150-foot Arena Tower. The 188-step tower, has since been closed to the public because of insurance costs. In one of their meetings, Murphy asked Snider if he thought the complex was too large for a city of 35,000..."*His answer was yes*" ....Day in and day out for half a century, the facility's operating deficit has averaged about \$1,000 a day. Roughly three times more than the \$125,000 annual deficit projected by Murphy.

Murphy the tough-minded businessman, insisted no one should get a free ride. Anyone who used the facility was to pay a fair price, including the Port Huron Flags, a hockey club that played its first game a few weeks after the Main Arena opened. Murphy turned it into a hockey arena.. *"it was a mistake on his part. They had to put the ice-making equipment upstairs, which was taboo... became very expensive and difficult to operate"*...The co-owners of the Flags, struggled to keep the International Hockey League franchise afloat. In 1970, they gave up and turned the team over to the McMorran Authority.

Snider took over as the GM and led the Flags to Turner Cups in '71 and '72. They also reached the finals in '73, '76 and '78 with players such as Bob McCammon and current Boston Bruin head coach Claude Julien...With his long background in hockey, Snider convinced several NHL clubs, including the Chicago Blackhawks and the Cleveland Barons, to use McMorran for training camps and exhibitions games..He also formed an affiliation with the Detroit Red Wings, who used Port Huron as a training base. The Flags even changed their nickname and took the ice as the Port Huron Wings for three seasons. Snider was approached by Detroit Red Wings owner Bruce Norris, who was looking for a general manager for his storied team. Moe chose to remain in Port Huron, a community he had come to love.

Even in the best years, the Flags were only borderline profitable. During economic hard times, the losses soared to more than \$400,000 a year... *"There was no light at the end of the tunnel.. Port Huron just wasn't a hockey town"*... The franchise folded in 1981.

In the absence of hockey, Snider focused on conventions, banquets, weddings and catering. *"It was lucrative.. he recruited some big conventions, like the Shriners and the Jehovah's Witnesses, that brought thousands of people into town"*.. He remembers obstacles such as shortages of motel rooms and restaurant tables for the bigger conventions. The arena lacked air conditioning, and diversions such as St. Clair River cruises and Vantage Point didn't exist...*"It would be a lot easier now"* .. he readily admitted of the convention business.

Snider also promoted concerts, which led to a close friendship with Liberace. It's not well-remembered, but the highest-paid entertainer of the 1950s and '60s wasn't Elvis Presley or the Beatles. It was Liberace, the piano-playing native of suburban Milwaukee known as the *"Glitter Man"*. His friends called him Lee...Snider remembers getting a call from Liberace's manager just hours before a scheduled performance at McMorran. *"He tells Morris that Lee has pneumonia. No way can he go on tonight. Do you think you could get a doctor??"*... Snider placed a call to a friend, the Chief Surgeon at Port Huron Hospital, who treated the ailing performer....*"Liberace put on one helluva of a show"*.. Snider would later relate..Afterwards, Snider got another call from his manager. He says,.. *"Lee is really hungry and he'd like a nice steak with sliced tomatoes only. Do you think you could help"??*... Finding a steak in Port Huron at midnight wasn't easy, but Snider put in a call to restaurateur Ron Saffee, who took care of the cooking. Snider played waiter and delivered the meal to the entertainer's hotel room....The next day, Snider and his wife, offered to drive Liberace to London, the site of his next performance... *"Morris had a Buick Riviera and I told him, he'd be more comfortable riding in it, than in the bus with the band.. Lee agreed, they brought him over to the house while Lumina got dressed for the trip....* Liberace noticed the baby grand piano and put on an impromptu concert in Sniders' living room..they became friends. Any time Morris was in a place where Lee was performing, Vegas or California, he would make it a point of calling on Liberace. He even met his mother.

Inducted into Port Huron's Sports Hall of Fame in 2002...Snider also quietly helped to develop the substance-abuse and alcohol-treatment programs at Port Huron Hospital. Honored in 2004, as the Recipient of Port Huron's, Lifetime Achievement Award. Recognizing this rare individual, who consistently and unselfishly gave an extraordinary amount of time and personal effort over the course of many years, towards the betterment of their community and fellow man. Snider certainly qualified in that regard.

Snider was the GM of the Port Huron Flags when he hired Mike "Doc" Emrick in 1973, to do play-by-play and public relations for the IHL team. At the time, Morris had no idea that they would become such close friends.. they maintained a very close relationship, up and until Snider's untimely passing. Mike was the MC at Snider's retirement and he also delivered an outstanding eulogy during the funeral service.

Emerick went on to a very successful career and currently the lead play-by-play announcer for the NHL New Jersey Devils on MSG Plus, as well as lead announcer for NHL national telecasts on both NBC and Versus. The recipient of the NHL's Lester Patrick Award in 2004, and the Foster Hewitt Memorial Award by the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2008. He worked his third Olympic Games for NBC. And on two occasions with CBS and once for TNT.

Snider had some strong opinions about the future of McMorran Place, although he acknowledges: "No one in a position of authority cares what I have to say. They've made that clear... *If they did listen, he would propose expanding the college campus to include the complex. It would be part and parcel of the college...Murphy would have loved that. It was what he wanted from the beginning*"... And what would the college do with McMorran Place?... *"Open a culinary school.. It would be ideal for that...it also could be the main venue for college sports programs, as well as for a good high school hockey league. ..And I'd be fighting to buy the Newman Center.. the shuttered Catholic Church next door..with it's nice kitchen.. it's perfect for weddings... it would be a good side-revenue producer."*... On the other hand, Snider expects none of this will ever happen... fearing a proposal to sell the naming rights to the arena to the highest bidder... *"He just could not believe that anyone would put dollars and cents ahead of the family's contribution.. it should not be completely forgotten. It would be very disturbing and heart-breaking."*

Recognized and the recipient of ORFA's Life Membership and their Award of Distinction.. The Alumni's ...Retirement Recognition, The Ethel & Paul Saxe Memorial Award ..and... Morris & Lumina's 50th, 55th and 60th Wedding Anniversary. The Snider's would have celebrated their 65th Anniversary in 2011



**Pics left to right..** Snider 55th Wedding Anniversary.. ORFA Award of Distinction.. **Bottom left to right....**1996 Snider Retirement and The Ethel & Paul Saxe Memorial Award in 2008

