



## Warren Michael Lisec

March 26, 1938 - December 23, 2023

Warren Michael Lisec died at home on Saturday, December 23, 2023, surrounded by his family. He was 85.

Mike is survived by his wife of 64 years, Katherine (Miller), his three sons Aaron (Melinda Bloos), Andrew (Alicia Hall), and Alec (Donna DelVecchio), grandchildren Emma and Samuel, and cousin Susan (Carlson) Haase. He was preceded in death by his parents Otto and Irene (Minarik), aunt Joan (Minarik) Carlson, brother Ted, and close family friend Katherine Prescott.

Mike was born March 26, 1938, in Chicago, the grandson of immigrants from Bohemia (now Czech Republic). He grew up in Oak Park, Belvidere, Barrington, and Arlington Heights, where he graduated high school in 1956. Mike enrolled at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign intending to study engineering but soon switched to architecture, joining the last cadre of students schooled in the Beaux Arts method at U of I. A notable professor was Gabriel Guevrekian, one of a circle of avant-garde architects in 1920s Paris that included Le Corbusier.

After graduating in 1961, Mike joined Harry Weese Associates (HWA) in Chicago. His early projects included the First Baptist Church in Columbus, Indiana (1965); Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics at the University of Colorado in Boulder (1965); and Seventeenth Church of Christ

Scientist (1968), 55 East Wacker Drive in Chicago. Other notable projects were performing arts centers in Milwaukee and Grand Rapids and the Healey Library at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. In 1977, Michael left HWA and partnered with several other architects, lastly his son Alec. During this second half of his career, building on his HWA experience on projects like the University of Chicago's Court Theater, he showed a remarkable talent for theater design as seen in the Royal George and Mercury theaters in Chicago.

Mike also excelled in historic preservation, working to restore Frank Lloyd Wright's Pettit Chapel in Belvidere, Illinois as well as the Jeffery Highlands Apartments in Chicago, which won a National Trust for Historic Preservation honor award. In the 1980's he worked with ShoreBank, the nation's first community development bank, to design affordable housing on Chicago's south and west sides. Mike also had a long and productive relationship with the Paul G. Stewart Center, in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood, founded by Charles Beckett, pioneering community activist and Illinois' first African American certified public accountant. Mike often combined his two passions for historic preservation and affordable housing, as in the restoration and rehabilitation of the Raymond Hilliard Homes, originally designed by architect Bertrand Goldberg, which won the National Trust/HUD Secretary's Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation. Mike retired in 2020 at the age of 82. Alec continues their practice.

Mike had many interests outside of architecture. He was a lifelong student of history and never passed up a historical marker on family road trips in our beloved Volkswagen Camper Bus. He enjoyed travel, with memorable trips to Spain, Morocco, Paris, Budapest and Great Britain, as well as a pilgrimage to ancestral Czech villages. In the early 1970s he participated in Fox River cleanups with legendary Chicago canoeist and environmentalist Ralph Frese. An avid birdwatcher, he was a familiar figure at Montrose Harbor's "Magic Hedge." For years he scoured the monthly Kane County flea market for

antique fountain pens, eventually selling his collection at an impressive profit. He was a talented artist whose subjects ranged from central Illinois grain elevators to Florida coastal scenes. An Anglophile, he enjoyed reading and watching British mysteries. But his chief passion was music.

Mike and Kathy had season tickets to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from the late 1960s until he broke his hip before the 2022-23 season. He played the piano from childhood, fronted a jazz band (on guitar) in high school and participated in the ragtime revival of the 1970s, painstakingly learning Scott Joplin tunes (and annoying his teenage sons). Later in life he embraced Irish traditional music, taking up the concertina and studying with local musicians and the visiting County Clare virtuoso Noel Hill. He sat in on weekly sessions at Irish pubs, including Chief O'Neill's, and over Zoom during Covid. He also tackled the violin and joined DePaul's New Horizons String Orchestra under conductor Mina Zikri. Playing music in company with others brought much joy to his last years. Though his last months were challenging Mike never complained. He formed close bonds with his faithful caregivers. He was alert to the end and doggedly worked the daily puzzles in friendly competition with his sons.

Mike donated his body to science through the Anatomical Gift Association of Illinois.

A farewell party is planned. Please check back to this website for information as it becomes available.

Please consider a donation to the Northbrook Symphony Orchestra (<https://www.northbrooksymphony.org/>) or the Oistrakh Symphony of Chicago (<https://www.oistrakhsymphony.org/>).

Arrangements by Inclusive Funeral Care, 773-370-2959 or [www.InclusiveFuneralCare.com](http://www.InclusiveFuneralCare.com).

# Tribute Wall

JF

“ My name is John Forsyth. I am a retired physician in Medford, Oregon, where I practiced for over 40 years. I knew and enjoyed Mike for the five years he was at U of I, beginning in 1956 at the Chi Psi house and later when he and Sayre Andersen shared a small apartment, where they were so generous to me, sharing a quiet place to study and more than a few serious conversations ... often over a beer! He was a marvelous and thoughtful friend during all those years! After leaving University of Illinois, we only connected twice (other than annual Christmas cards, which I suspect made him laugh more than usual at my philosophic ramblings!) Both of those occasions were in Oak Park (when my wife Lynne's family passed away) but provided an opportunity for nice dinners with him and Kathy. After that, I visited the several buildings he designed at Reed College here in Oregon ... marvelous! I was always so impressed by his honesty, his marvelous quiet humor, his intelligence ... and his incredibly compassionate creativity. I can only suspect the great depth of your sadness and your loss. Due to age and frailty, I will not be able to attend this celebration. I appreciate this opportunity to say farewell to my esteemed friend ... With gratitude to have shared only a small slice of his remarkable life,  
John Forsyth, M.D.

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John Forsyth - January 11, 2024 at 12:34 PM

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“ He was always Uncle Mike to me. Even tho I know my cousins, their families, and Aunt Kathy are especially missing him now, that is partially because of the special and close family that they all are. I'm wishing you all the highest blessings as you lean on one another, and dwell in those warm family memories.  
So Much Love to You All.  
Nancy

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Nancy - January 08, 2024 at 06:22 PM

SS

“ My condolences to the Lisec family and especially to son Alec and wife Katherine. I had the pleasure of knowing Mike semi-professionally through his extensive volunteering work for the South Lakeview Neighbors community organization which is the area of his home. His architecture expertise and detail knowledge of zoning codes were indispensable for decades to the Neighborhood Development Review Committee which was able to strike the right balance between gentrification, new development and the quality-of-life aspects for the area's homeowners. I always thought his bright mind worked like a mountain lake - cool, calm and crystal clear. Many complex issues were made to be understandable by his explanations. We will miss him and his involvement. A good, caring and talented man has passed.

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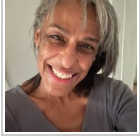
Sam N Samatas - January 01, 2024 at 05:06 PM

JS

“ Jorge S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Warren Michael Lisec.

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Jorge S. - December 30, 2023 at 07:01 AM



“ *I have so many fond memories! Good times, festive meals, cool information and stories and knowledge, the best dry corny jokes. The first encounter was the most remembered. I had come to the Lisec's house to meet my friend's family when we were in college. We all had a lovely time! I decided to blast Mike with a big huge as we left. They weren't very huggy being all sons. Awkward! Caught everyone off guard, especially him. He smiled. I loved it so much! I love him so much. Forever.*

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**Toni Hoskin** - December 29, 2023 at 09:16 PM



“ *Mike was a very kind person, my Best memories were from all architectural designs to the sweet Mazel Tov posted when my daughter got married to his advises, to his teaching  
G od has an angel closer now*

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**jorge gloger** - December 29, 2023 at 08:17 PM