

Frederick "Fritz" Whitmore

September 5, 1937 - February 2, 2026

LEXINGTON- Frederick "Fritz" Whitmore, age 88, departed this world for a happier eternity on Monday, February 2nd, 2026, in Port Huron, uplifted by the devoted prayers of many friends and surrounded by the love of his children.

Born on September 5th, 1937, in Crosswell, Michigan, Fritz was the youngest child of 11 siblings in the large household of Lewis V. Whitmore, originally of Dowagiac, and Phoebe Ann (Emeigh), of rural Lexington.

Sometimes self-conscious and reluctant to talk about parts of his childhood, right from the start Fritz's earliest years were often fraught with unexpected tragedy, grief, and poverty. Despite the impact of those challenges on his entire family, he met each as best he could; even learning resilience and compassion despite each hardship.

Barely beyond toddler age, he was accidentally struck and run over by a car that was speeding through his neighborhood. The accident left him with serious internal injuries and threats to his ability to walk. But over time he made a full recovery.

Just months after his 9th birthday, his father died from lingering injuries caused by a workplace construction accident. This left his family impoverished, and his aging mother and elder siblings had to find work to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table. But even young Fritz did his part. Despite his only being in 3rd grade at the time, he took on a paying job delivering newspapers each day before school, and he came to like the job so much that he stuck with it for the next four years.

Fritz later recalled those times having been especially hard. He even claimed that he, "...worked at as many miscellaneous part-time jobs as time and needs demanded to survive." But the rough patches in life taught him patience and responsibility, and he even managed to have some fun along the way.

Despite insecurities about certain aspects of his home life, he enjoyed school (especially team sports) and he made many friends in his neighborhood and in the classroom. After his lessons and chores were done for the day, he sometimes joined those friends for all kinds of imagination-fueled adventures along the nearby C&O railroad tracks, in back lots all over town, and during warmer weather on the muddy trails through the weedy, tree-lined banks of Croswell's Black River. When his earnings (and mother) allowed it, he loved watching his silver screen cowboy heroes during Saturday matinees at the Maxine Theater in town. And as he grew, he learned much from the athletic mentorship of his elder brothers, even becoming a standout member in his own right on the Cros-Lex High School football team. As one of a tight-knit circle of bosom friends, he and his 1950s-school pals progressed first to a love for lively jukebox tunes, to hustling buddies for a few bucks at the local billiard hall in town, to riding a single motorcycle they all shared, to dreaming about (and later owning) some of the sportiest automobiles of their day. Naturally, their interests eventually broadened to include girls, who for some strange reason by about their young teen years, suddenly became more interesting.

During Fritz's Junior and Senior High School years, he worked as a grease-monkey and station attendant at Mr. Wes Cook's Standard Oil gas station in Croswell. That job not only taught him the finer points of auto mechanics, but it was also a clever way to meet girls when they showed up at the fuel pumps, escorted by their fathers or elder brothers behind the wheel. Young Fritz got a chance to impress or even chat with some of those young ladies while he filled the tank, or gave their father's gleaming steeds the special full-service treatment.

As proof the once shy and reluctant Fritz was beginning to bloom, early in the

Autumn of his Junior year in school, quite unexpectedly, his classmates elected him High School Homecoming King!

But tragedy was never very far away from his family. In late October 1955, barely six weeks after Fritz's 18th birthday, his beloved elder-brother Ken was killed in a horrific accident involving a gravel-pit crane. Fritz took Kenny's death especially hard. To compound the family's grief, Ken was still a young newlywed at the time he was killed, leaving behind a lovely bride he had married not quite three months before.

Fritz graduated Cros-Lex High in 1956. Having completed some of his course credits early, he also worked part of each weekday for a new employer: the Michigan Bell Telephone Company, from their field office in Crosswell. To pick up additional hours he also moonlighted as a chain-man and backup referee during home games back at the high school; and he even became assistant "digger" at the Crosswell Cemetery for a short time. As he began to find steadier jobs and a more reliable income, however, he could afford to explore other hobbies and career interests, many that fed his voracious appetite for reading; even including a correspondence course in electronics, something that helped him on the job with the telephone company.

On September 5th, 1959 (Fritz's 22nd birthday) he married Jo Ann (Utle) of rural Lexington. She was a younger classmate and his once-upon-a-time high school sweetheart. She too had been high school 'royalty', having been elected the Homecoming Queen for her own Cros-Lex graduating class.

Their first-born son, Bret Steven, arrived on December 1st of the following year. Sadly, child number two, Kelli Val (their first daughter), was stillborn on 31 May 1962. But their second son, Brad Collin, arrived healthy on 10 May 1963. Then Holli Rae, daughter number two, joined the team on August 8th of 1965, and finally, daughter number three, Terryn Leigh, completed the bunch on August 1st, 1974.

Highlighting another side to his many talents, Fritz played a unique role during Crosswell's locally famous and immensely popular summer "Showboat"

productions in the early 1960s. This fun musical revue, reminiscent of vaudeville and early minstrel shows, showcased a full cast of gifted local talent. It took place on a floating, barge-like 'paddle-wheeler' that Fritz and other members of the Showboat committee had constructed themselves. Local newspapers frequently shared news about the follies, and even noted that Fritz was elected President of the Black River Showboat board for 1963. For the last nearly 33 years of his working life, Fritz dedicated his professional loyalty, labor, and service to the Michigan Bell Telephone Company. Over all that time-- most of it unrecognized by the public-- he worked his way up from a raw, pole-climbing Construction Lineman, to Acting Line Foreman, to Line Foreman, to Splicing Foreman, to Interim Foreman, and eventually to Construction Supervisor-- responsibilities that began small in Croswell, but eventually extended from as far south as Algonac and its environs, all the way to the top of the Thumb.

He was not the type to brag about his accomplishments unless they were part of a successful team effort. But he recalled the biggest challenges he and his crews ever faced were the non-stop 14-hour days required over a span of two straight weeks, as he and his team cleared roads of fallen trees, freed hundreds of miles of ice-encased lead lines, reset countless dozens of new poles, and restored vital telephone service to tens of thousands of local customers during Michigan's worst late-winter ice storm ever, in March of 1976. Of all his years with "Ma Bell", while that level of "storm work" was the hardest he ever faced, he claims it was also the proudest work he had ever done.

During Fritz's best years, if he decided to say anything at all, he usually chose his words wisely. But his life was far more about deeds than words. He most often expressed his care for others-- and especially his love for his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren-- through his keen interest in their well being, his thoughtfulness, and his quiet and unexpected generosity.

He was no saint of course; a point he would sometimes repeat in much the same words. But he was a priceless diamond-in-the-rough; a humble fellow

with an innocent faith, high ideals, and the very best of intentions. He admired and tried hard to learn from wiser and more accomplished men; chief among them being Jesus Christ, Our savior. And while he didn't flash that fact around like some badge of distinction, we do know for certain that well before his last days, he had his reservations made for Heaven, and he was on good terms with his Maker.

Such is the essence of a humble and service-filled life well-lived; and an example we all might try to follow, hopeful in faith that we too some day might hear those beloved words: "Well done thou good and faithful servant...."
(Matthew 25:21)

Fritz is survived by his four remaining children: Bret (Cindy) Whitmore of Rapid City, South Dakota; Brad (Wendy) Whitmore of Traverse City, Michigan; Holli (Ronald) Crum of Linden, Michigan; and Terryn Hodges of Colorado Springs, Colorado; nine grandchildren: Allen (Michaela) Crum, Gwyn Whitmore, Alicia (Jeff) Moleski, Ricky Whitmore, Ben (Brianne) Whitmore, Chris (Sophia) Whitmore, Dylan Hodges, Julia Hodges, and Preston (Karlene) Crum; great grandsons Emerson and Lincoln Moleski, Carson Crum, Fletcher Whitmore, and Luka Whitmore; and several nieces, nephews, beloved friends, and kind neighbors.

Fritz was preceded in death by both parents, all 10 of his direct siblings, all four half-siblings from his father's previous marriage, his infant daughter Kelli Val, and his granddaughter Tamara Rene Whitmore.

Visitation will be from 1-3 P.M. on Saturday at the Pomeroy Funeral Home in Croswell. Funeral services will be held at 3 P.M. Saturday afternoon at the funeral home.

Cemetery Details

Croswell Cemetery

299 Davis Street
Croswell, MI 48422

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 7. 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Pomeroy Funeral Home - Croswell
6 S. Howard Ave.
Croswell, MI 48422
(810) 679-9800
pomeroyfuneralhomes@gmail.com
<https://pomeroyfuneralhomes.com/>

Service

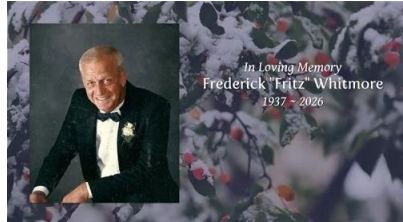
FEB 7. 3:00 PM (ET)

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6 S. Howard Ave.
Croswell, MI 48422
(810) 679-9800
pomeroyfuneralhomes@gmail.com
<https://pomeroyfuneralhomes.com/>

Tribute Wall



“ Pomeroy Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Frederick "Fritz" Whitmore



Pomeroy Funeral Home - February 05 at 08:50 AM

AK

RIP FRITZ, many memories of you at Bush's, sending hugs and healing to all family members . Angie Krzysiak was campbell back in the day.

Angela Krzysiak - February 05 at 05:44 PM

RR

“ Reva R. purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Frederick "Fritz" Whitmore.



Reva R. - February 05 at 10:28 PM

TC

“ Tender Care Veterinary Center purchased the Beautiful Dreams for the family of Frederick "Fritz" Whitmore.



Tender Care Veterinary Center - February 04 at 01:03 PM

PH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



pomeroy funeral home - February 03 at 03:34 PM