Lawrence William Schenden’s birth was overshadowed in the news by the stock market crash of 1929. The third of ten children of a physician and nurse, Larry grew up in the downriver suburbs of Detroit. His father hailed from Greenville, Michigan where the Schenden ancestors originally settled from Germany. Larry’s mother was a city girl, growing up in downtown Detroit. She would tell stories well into her nineties of her childhood days playing with her dolls in Grand Circus Park and walking to the famous downtown J.L. Hudson Department store to purchase a spool of thread for her mother. Her French ancestors were among the original settlers of the city of Detroit.

The Great Depression was Larry’s childhood. During these lean years, his father had been paid by his patients with livestock. Larry attended St. Mary Magdalen grade school in Melvindale and St. Francis Xavier High School in Ecorse. Though people who knew Larry in his adult years do not believe it, his classmates would share that he was very quiet and shy as a child.

Larry earned a business degree at the University of Detroit in 1951. He was a devoted U of D Titan fan. While he closely followed Titan basketball each season, he forever lamented that U of D gave up the sport of football in the sixties.

Larry’s love for sports started at an early age and continued throughout his life. As a teenager, Larry played high school football. His adult athletic exploits would revolve around the athletic club memberships he held until the day he died, specifically many years as a member of Beechview Swim Club in Farmington Hills. Larry loved to swim his laps, and attributed the minimal hairs on his head to years of swimming -- though nobody believed his tale.

It would be difficult to pinpoint which sports team was Larry’s true passion. The aforementioned Titan basketball team kept his attention in the winter. Fall football weekends focused on the Notre Dame Fighting Irish and he closely followed Detroit Catholic Central High School’s gridiron exploits. A conversation with Larry during the spring and summer would definitely include his opinion on the latest Detroit Tiger baseball game.

However, nothing was more important than Larry’s family. Larry met Rosemary in 1956 at a horseback riding outing. They were engaged within six months and married the following October – on Larry’s birthday. Marrying on this date was a decision Rosemary would come to regret. Larry’s birthday always overshadowed their anniversary! True to form, while driving to their Florida honeymoon, Larry convinced Rosemary to stop at Tulane University to attend a football game.

Three children quickly followed their marriage in just under three years.

Mary Beth, Anne and Larry filled their Warren, Michigan ranch home. Larry was in sales for plumbing manufacturer Briggs and Eljer during those years, spending many days on the road. When offered an opportunity to relinquish the travel part of his job, Larry joined the Plumbers Wholesale Supply Company in Detroit where he would spend the next quarter century and retire as Vice President in 1988. However, a combination of the considerable daily drive from Warren to the west side of Detroit plus the addition of a fourth child, Greg, prompted a move to Farmington Hills. The children grew up in Larry & Rosemary’s first Farmington Hills home – a great neighborhood with lots of kids and a huge backyard where Larry tended his garden. After Larry’s retirement, he obtained his builders license and built his final home, also in Farmington Hills. Larry was very proud of this accomplishment and in the final years of his life, often just looked around and told Rosemary “this is a beautiful house”.

And it was.
The building of this house was the fateful event that caused the paths of Janice Ellen Hale and the Schenden's to cross. Janice Hale had moved into her home across from the vacant lot on which Larry and Rosemary built their home a few months later. The Schenden's saw Janice, a single parent raising her son, Keith (Kito) Benson across the street from them. A famous person was asked once why he assisted one person who needed his help when there were so many more who needed help, as well. He responded that this person “crossed my path”. That was the attitude of the Schenden’s. They reached out to Janice Hale and her 2-½ year old son to provide whatever support they could.

One thing that they noticed was that Janice had a car that often needed repair. They learned that she was sending her son to a very expensive private school. The breakdown of her car was a frequent, traumatic, unplanned event. Larry told Janice that he never wanted to see a rental car or a cab in her driveway. He told her that he and his wife were retired and though they had two cars, they most often traveled together. He invited her to knock on the door and ask for a car when she needed one. Janice was skeptical and took him up on the offer to determine whether he meant it. She was surprised when he handed her the keys with no questions asked. This was the beginning of a warm, loving, eternal relationship.

Janice and the Schenden’s visited often in the evenings to talk. They spent holidays together. Larry and Rosemary attended Keith’s basketball games when he was a child. She met his family. They met hers. Janice lovingly referred to them as her “parents” because the love they showed her was akin to the love she received only from her own parents. Larry and Rosemary would listen to her problems and to the challenges she was facing personally and professionally. Larry would always say that “we are on only one side – Janice’s side!” The children in the neighborhood referred to them as the “nice people” on the street.

Larry and Rosemary made numerous contributions to ISAAC. Notable were the memorial donations they made in the memory of Janice’s father, Rev. Phale D. Hale and her mother, Cleo Ingram Hale when they passed to eternity. It is her pleasure to make a memorial donation to ISAAC in the memory of Lawrence Schenden.

Larry was incredibly proud of his children. He and Rosemary produced an accountant, a doctor, a nurse and a priest. He was very proud of his son-in-law Jim who is an orthopaedic surgeon. He adored his three grandsons, Joseph, Daniel & John; looking forward to each summer when they visited from Iowa. And those nine siblings of Larry’s were incredibly close despite the fact that half of them eventually migrated to California and Colorado. When Larry passed away, his youngest sister lamented that Larry was the glue that held the family together. Larry LOVED to talk on the phone and a day would not go by that he would not talk to at least one of his siblings.

Larry will be missed by his beloved family and many dear friends. Larry was preceded in death by his parents, Augustine and Alice Riley Schenden; brother Matthew, and sister Alice Barahl. Leaving to cherish his memory are: his beloved wife of over 55 years, Rosemary; children Mary Beth, Lawrence, M.D., Anne (James, M.D.) Pape and Fr. Gregory, SJ; grandsons Joseph, Daniel and John Pape; siblings John, Margaret Ashburn, Vincent, Herbert, Jerome, Karen Quintana and Diane Adams. He is also survived by sisters- and brothers- in-law; and many caring nieces and nephews. The treasure of so many warm memories from his 83 years on this earth will enable him to live in our hearts. The faith that was such an integral part of Larry’s life provides his survivors with the peace that he is living a new life where we will join him one day.

Written Cooperatively by
Mary Beth Schenden
Janice Ellen Hale, Ph.D

Memorial Donations

Memorial Donations can be made in memory of Lawrence W. Schenden through the ISAAC website. Go to the “Donate to ISAAC” link on the left menu of the Home Page of the web site at: www.isaac.wayne.edu. All donations are 100% tax deductible. You can alternatively send your donation to Dr. Janice E. Hale at 30336 Stratford Court, Farmington Hills, Michigan 48331. Checks should be made payable to Wayne State / ISAAC. The names of all donors will be listed on the ISAAC web site. Also, friends and family members are encouraged to make annual donations on Lawrence W. Schenden’s birthday (October 12th) or on Father’s Day in his memory. Each donation will be memorialized on the ISAAC web site. Any supporter of ISAAC who wants to request that donations be made in the memory of a loved one in lieu of flowers can request the creation of a memorial page with a listing of donations made in their memory. For more information, contact Dr. Janice Hale at janiceehale@cs.com.