



Michael Joe Halferty Rater

June 4, 1956 - April 27, 2019

Michael Joe Halferty Rater

6/4/56 - 4/27/19

I know I'm going to have to pare this down for his memorial folder, but this is what I wrote for my brother...

Michael Joe Halferty Rater ("Liesa Durant"), 62, passed away peacefully surrounded by his loving family on Saturday, April 27th, 2019, at Taylor House Hospice in Des Moines, IA. Michael had recently been diagnosed with Stage IV lung cancer in March and underwent a grueling brain surgery to remove a softball-sized tumor on March 21st. Michael fought hard in his final weeks to recover and to get "home" to Iowa, and he made it...with his baby sister, Jami, and his best friend, Mark, on either side of him. Wish fulfilled...

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, May 11th, 2019, at Prairie Ridge Church (825 NW 36th Street, Ankeny, IA). Visitation with the family will be from 10am - 11am with the memorial service to follow from 11am - 12pm. There will be a Celebration of Life to follow from 2pm - 6pm at The Blazing Saddle (416 E. 5th Street, Des Moines, IA).

Michael was born on June 4, 1956 in Salinas, CA, to Joe Halferty and Sondra

(Durant) Rater. He and his mother returned to her hometown of Newton, IA, as a small baby. Michael and his family lived in several cities over his childhood, but finally settled in Ankeny, IA, for his school years, where he was raised and loved by his “Dad”, Kenneth Rater. Michael graduated from Ankeny HS in 1974. After graduation, he moved to Minneapolis & Mankato, MN, and then to Omaha & Lincoln, NE, before moving to Atlanta & Cochran, GA, where he spent the last 30 years with the love of his life, Timothy Belflower.

Michael attended Capitol School of Hairstyling in Omaha, Nebraska, where he received his cosmetology degree. Michael worked in several salons over the years and was an amazing hair stylist! But, most importantly, Michael was a pioneer in the gay community in Des Moines in the 70's and 80's, as well as all of the other cities he lived in. He was the legendary “Liesa Durant”, and was Des Moines' first Miss Gay Iowa in 1977. He was a founding member of “The Sugar Plum Fairies”, a midwestern traveling drag troupe, which later became “The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence”. Michael could perform like no other. He had “his songs” that no one else could or even dared to touch! He performed everything from Barbra Streisand to Donna Summer to Boy George and just about everything in between. He did it with a sophistication and grace that came naturally to him. He oftentimes used his own hair and those eyebrows...well, let's just say, if you ever saw them, you for sure remembered them. He was beautiful, inside and out, was an amazing cook and decorator, and had style and class that was the envy of many, not to mention a sense of humor and sarcasm that was second to none!

Michael loved and cherished his family and friends across the miles. He also deeply loved his dogs, Beaudine and Rufus, whom he tragically was never able to say goodbye to. We were fortunate enough to have two special canine angels visit Michael in his final days, Nugget and Buddy. I am certain Michael knew they were there and felt their kisses and their touch.

Michael is survived by his beloved mother and first friend, Sondra Ratliff of Raymore, MO, sister, Lani (Raleigh) Kirschman of Salem, OR, sister, Kelli Wright of Elkhart, IA, brother, Jeff (Tommie) Rater of Carrollton, MO, and his baby sister, Jami (Todd) Martin of Ankeny, IA. Numerous beloved nieces & nephews...Amber Daniels, April Friesner, Erika Rater, Kennedy Rater, Ashley Heins, Amber Ritchhart, TJ Rater, Austin Anderson, Kristina Anderson, and Alex Martin, and several great-nieces and nephews, and his entire Halferty family in Newton. Michael is also survived by his very best friend of over 45 years, Mark ("Marcie Durant") Brown, who was instrumental in helping to get Michael "home".

Michael was preceded in death by the love of his life, Timothy Belflower in 2017, his "Dad" Kenneth Rater, Sr. all of his beloved grandparents, several aunts, uncles & cousins, sister-in-law Danell Friesner, nephew Dustin Friesner, and his precious dog Max.

I would like to extend the biggest, most sincere, heartfelt thank-you to all of Michael's Angels that made it possible for him to make it home...Dr. Karanth and the physicians and staff at Augusta University Medical Center in Augusta, GA, his night nurse, Angela, Christopher w/ Respiratory Therapy, Joni & Josh w/Southeast Homecare, Tyron Transportation, the staff @ Augusta Regional Airport, all of the wonderful staff with American Airlines in Augusta and Charlotte (especially Pilot Jared & his crew Austin/Ericka/Susan), the EMT staff at the DSM Airport, Mercy Ambulance in DSM, ALL of the staff at Taylor House Hospice, Ankeny HS Class of '74, everyone who donated to his GoFundMe to help bring him home, his dearest friends who called him numerous times EVERY SINGLE DAY while in the hospital and who visited him in hospice and provided so much laughter and love in his final days (Mark, Dusty, Pat, Jeffery, Lili, Mitch, Larry, Rusty, Chad, Bobby, & David), and to my team of Angels and friends who allowed me to be gone and care for my

brother, my dear friend Debra @ Dyamond Memorial for her compassion & expertise, my dear friend Rick Hornberg & Buddy for your support, advice & puppy snuggles, our best friends who ALWAYS make sure we are taken care and that we eat, Chip & Michelle Murrow, my Aunt Kathy & Uncle Keith Sevenbergen and their daughter Staci Arnold for the heartfelt care packages they sent to Michael in the hospital, and to Peggy & Ronnie Stokes and their daughter Stephanie Little for being there for Michael all of his years in Georgia and for treating him like family and being there for him in his final months. I want you all to know how very much I love and appreciate you all for everything you have done for Michael, for me, and for my family, for the love, prayers donations, humor, food, hugs, phone calls and the list goes on and on...

Thank you and God Bless...

~jami

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 11. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Prairie Ridge Church
825 NW 36th Street
Ankeny, IA 50023

Celebration of Life

MAY 11. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Prairie Ridge Church
825 NW 36th Street
Ankeny, IA 50023

Celebration of Life Gathering

MAY 11. 2:00 PM - 6:00 PM (CT)

The Blazing Saddle
416 E. 5th Street
Des Moines, IA 50309

Tribute Wall



“ Merry Christmas, my dearest brother,
Michael. I miss you so... 😊

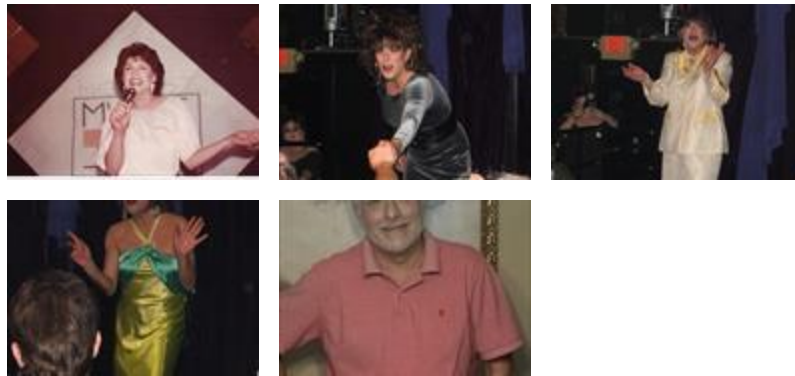
~jami kathleen



Jami Martin - December 20, 2022 at 12:25 AM



“ 9 files added to the album Memories Album



Jami Martin - July 17, 2019 at 03:18 PM



“ Mark Brown lit a candle in memory of Michael
Joe Halferty Rater



Mark Brown - May 04, 2019 at 10:31 AM

AS

“ From the day I set foot into the scene and, made the decisions I made, Michael was always there. Though I can no longer see him in the physical, we can connect in the spiritual. You changed my life. Love you Michael.

Audra Scott - May 02, 2019 at 09:27 PM

Robert Leth

“ Michael was such a sensitive soul. He worried about his friends more than his friends worried about themselves. He was a genuinely good person. I am so saddened to hear of his untimely passing.

Robert Leth - May 02, 2019 at 08:52 PM

Robert Wright

“ Robert Wright lit a candle in memory of Michael Joe Halferty Rater



Robert Wright - May 02, 2019 at 11:59 AM

JW

“ Jeffrey Danielson A.k.a Wanda Waller lit a candle in memory of Michael Joe Halferty Rater



Jeffrey Danielson a.k.a Wanda Waller - May 02, 2019 at 11:09 AM

JW

“ *My dear friend, you are an inspiration to me. You lived life as you wanted to, no excuses. I loved you for that fantastic attitude that you would give me. And yes, you are a great friend indeed. Rest easy by dear friend. We shall meet again one day.*

Jeffrey Danielson a.k.a Wanda Waller - May 02, 2019 at 11:07 AM

GV

“ *Michael or Liesa is one of the best friends I've ever had. He was courageous, compassionate and had a talent to make you take notice. Michael also had the talent to make me laugh so hard with little rhymes and other wonderful ways. I had the privilege to be his roommate in Atlanta and we went through Capital Beauty School in Omaha. He touched so many people's lives in a positive way. I'll always love him.* 💖

Grey VonStein - May 02, 2019 at 01:11 AM

 Mark
Brown

“ *Mark Brown lit a candle in memory of Michael
Joe Halferty Rater*



Mark Brown - April 30, 2019 at 01:08 AM

 Mark
Brown

“ For 48years I had the honor and privilege to call Michael my best friend and what a incredible fascinating joyous beautiful easy funny silly sad serious courageous uplifting selfless complimentary. These are some of the words that come to mind about our friendship we would disagree a little on things that at the time we thought was important but really it was stupid and unimportant and all those years not 1 fight I loved him idolized respected cherished and admired him .He was a amazing man God how I loved him .I hope that who ever reads this post finds there best friend you cant look for it.It just happens like ours did. Michael/ Liesa as Dolly Parton wrote I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU.
Your Best Friend
Mark/ Marcie Durant.

Mark Brown - April 30, 2019 at 01:06 AM

KW

“ Michael was my Older Brother. He was always kind and caring, a very hard worker. He was a very sharp dresser. Always dressed to the nines.. He was very protective of his friends and family. I didn't ever to get him see him perform his shows. So many people came to see him when he was in hospice. They all loved him and they had some stories to tell. That me and my family thoroughly enjoyed. I loved Michael with all of my heart and I know that he is no longer suffering and out of pain. Kelli Rater Wright

Kelli Rater Wright - April 30, 2019 at 12:47 AM

DS

“ To my family, love and deepest condolences. A life TRULY lived is never forgotten and no one did it their way better than Michael. Michael was funny, he was real, he was caring and just plain fun to be with. He could state the truth better than most and did it with a raw flair that only he could own. Your life's end wasn't easy BUT your loving & determined sister, Jami, made your final wishes come true. I know you now rest in the tender arms of God. No more are the chains of this world your burden. Free and HOME must have you dancing again, I'll keep looking for your signs to the show. Love always, Cousin Diane.



Diane Stephens - April 29, 2019 at 11:29 PM



I love you for this...thank you, dearest Cousin...forever my "Secret Ingredient"...

Jami Martin - April 01, 2024 at 03:59 PM