

From East Hampton Star Obituaries – April 1, 2010

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Jack Sargent

To most in Montauk, Jack Sargent was known simply as Sarge, but to Dina Hanson's 2-year-old son, he was Uncle Jack. Ms. Hanson said that when her son was born, "it was like his own grandson was born." Mr. Sargent, who was homeless during the last years of his life, spent much of his time with the Hanson family in East Hampton, traveling with them on camping trips and spending time with them on holidays.

As of this week, Ms. Hanson was in search of a photograph she took of Mr. Sargent on a bass fishing trip during one of those family camping trips to the Catskills. Grinning from behind his shaggy beard, she said, he was holding "the biggest fish that ever came out of that lake."

Ms. Hanson's son was not the only light in Mr. Sargent's life. He was deeply devoted to all the children of Montauk, and spent years as a coach and umpire for various softball and baseball leagues in the hamlet. "He adored kids," Ms. Hanson said this week.

Erik Hanson, Ms. Hanson's husband, said that Mr. Sargent was one of the first people he met when he moved to Montauk over 10 years ago. "If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be where I am today," he said. "He helped me out and I helped him out."



Mr. Sargent died on Friday at the Southampton Rehabilitation Center on County Road 39. He was 59 and had been diagnosed with lung cancer in January.

The people who cared about Mr. Sargent and whom he cared about were the "heart and soul of Montauk," Mr. Hanson said.

Richie Daunt, a Montauk resident and friend, spoke this week about the devotion Mr. Sargent had for the children and the sport. "He didn't have any family ties around here, but everybody knew him," he said. George Galloway, the owner of the Sail Inn in Montauk, wrote that he was a gentle and kind man who will be missed greatly. This week's column Chin Music by Jason Biondo in The Star's sports section is dedicated to Mr. Sargent's devotion to local baseball leagues.

Ms. Hanson remembered Mr. Sargent as a man with nothing negative to say about anyone or anything. After having had a heart attack several years ago, Mr. Sargent was admitted to St. Francis Hospital in Roslyn. When he was discharged, he left in a hospital gown and shoes with no money. He started hitchhiking back to Montauk and was picked up by police and given train fare to return. Once back, he found the entire community in mourning for him. Everyone thought that he had died. The members of the men's softball league came close to ordering black bands to wear on their arms in his honor. Mr. Sargent laughed the whole situation off.

At the nursing home where Mr. Sargent spent his last days, the nurses caring for him told Ms. Hanson that they had never met anyone with a terminal disease as upbeat and positive as he. "He said he was so happy we were brothers," Mr. Hanson said.

Mr. Sargent, who served in the Navy during the Vietnam War, was born in Detroit on Feb. 5, 1951. He came to Montauk in the 1980s as a contractor to help restore the Montauk Manor and never left. He continued his work as a carpenter through the years.

Mr. Sargent is survived by three sisters and a brother, all of Dearborn Heights, Mich. Another sister predeceased him. His son, Brad, and three grandchildren also survive, along with countless friends and generations of children who came to know him on the baseball diamond.

A celebration of his life will be held at the Sail Inn on April 17 from 3 to 6 p.m. All are invited to attend.