

A humble man, from humble beginnings, Gene grew up in the Bronx, spent some time in Florida and eventually settled in northern California. While his formal education ended at the ninth grade, he was in essence a "do it yourselfer"- there wasn't anything he couldn't do.

Skip was a veteran of the United States Army, serving at Ft. Ord during the Cuban Missile Crisis. A bit of a rascal in his youth, he was a champion flat track racer in the 1950's, and that love of motorcycles carried throughout his life, up through the last several years during which he enjoyed many rides with friends.

Skip and his business partner opened Clay and Paquette Automotive Machine Shop in 1965, expanding to two locations at one point, and recombining them into one larger location on 2nd Street in Yuba City in 1987. For a self-taught man, his owning the largest machine shop in Northern California is a true testament to his work ethic and dedication to family. He built race-winning engines and passed those skills on to his son.

His love for racing extended to sponsoring local drivers at Twin Cities Speedway during the 1970's. Those drivers often showed their appreciation for his support by honoring him with trophies from their wins.

Skip retired from the shop, but he wasn't done helping others, so he started driving a school bus for special needs children, which he did with great enjoyment for the last few years of his life. He was an active member of the Yuba Sutter Moose Lodge and spent a good portion of his time helping others. He had a special place in his heart for charities for children with brain cancer.

For those who knew Skip and his sense of humor, the irony of his passing on April Fool's Day should bring a smile.

He is survived by Sondra Leamons, his loving partner of many years; as well as his son, Christian Paquette; daughter, Courtney Paquette Middleton; granddaughters, Britnie and Kaylen Paquette; grandson, Jonathan Middleton; sisters, Cathy Bradshaw, Mary Koebler, and Dottie Shattuck.

Skip would always say, "I can rest when I'm dead", so Dad, may you rest in peace now. We were, and always shall be, proud of you and proud to be your family. Love and miss you.