



Francis H. Horst, Jr.

March 7, 1963 – November 15, 2022

Francis Harry Horst, Jr. was born in 1963, the son of Frank and Mary Horst (nee Dick) of Prospect Park, PA. He graduated from Interboro High School in 1980.

Francis was close to his father who predeceased him in 1997; his mother died ten years prior. He stayed in Delaware and Philadelphia Counties throughout his life, and made many friends where he worked, lived and went to church; they became his chosen family.

Francis had numerous health and emotional challenges beginning at a very early age. He had serious optical problems as a baby. He also developed swallowing problems. At the age of 30 he was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). He was indebted to the doctors and health care providers at Penn, including Dr. Craig Wynne and his staff, who helped to treat and stabilize his condition for more than 30 years.

Francis was employed by the John Wanamaker Department Store and successive owners from 1986 to 1996. He also worked at Strawbridge and Clothier before their closing. Francis found custodial work at Folcroft Union Church in the mid-1980's. He had many letters from his places of employment commending his "trustworthy service," "dependability" and "dedication to his work."

After being briefly unemployed, Francis requested help from a friend at the department store, Kermit De Berry. The De Berry family graciously offered him room and board, and introduced him to the owners of The Gables Bed and Breakfast in University City – Don Caskey and Warren Cederholm – to help with some much-needed assistance around the property. Francis began work at The Gables in the summer of 1997, and continued working there until the time of his death. He took on numerous odd jobs: picking up trash within a wide radius around The Gables, raking leaves, shoveling snow, sweeping the walks and

driveway, watering plants, and helping out wherever needed. It was as if Francis became his own "Special Services District."

The University City Historical Society noted the many hours Francis committed on behalf of the neighborhood, and honored him with an "Awards of the Streets" commendation. He was very proud of this award.

Helping with The Gables' annual neighborhood Christmas Open House was his favorite event of the year. He never complained about any tasks, and enjoyed meeting the guests – often assisting them with their luggage.

One of Francis' areas of special knowledge was the Philadelphia transportation system. He was of great assistance to guests of The Gables in finding their way around the city. He had SEPTA routes, connections and timetables memorized. People were amazed that he could so easily give them the number of the trolley, train or bus they should take, and any transfers they would need.

The Gables became a second home for Francis, and its owners and staff were like family for him. As Francis continued helping Don and Warren, he soon became part of their extended family. He spent many holidays either in Philadelphia or in Northern Pennsylvania, where they moved after selling The Gables in 2016. The new owners, Cesar Gonzales and Rick Hicks, maintained a close relationship with him.

As a child, Francis loved going with his father to the Jersey shore. Over the past many years he made frequent trips with friends and on his own – by bus – to Cape May, Ocean City and Ocean Grove. He made new friends on his journeys, and was grateful to many who became lasting friends and were supportive of his activities and travel.

Francis did not let his MS slow him down; "if there was a will, there was a way." Determination, tenacity and obsessive planning led Francis to a far better life than might have been expected given various adverse conditions and circumstances.

Faith was an important part of Francis's life, and he was a beloved member at Calvary United Methodist Church. He learned to grow as a child of God through his very strong faith and trust in God.