



Raymond "Jeff" Cassimiro Jonardi

May 16, 1929 - October 5, 2021

Raymond ("Jeff") Cassimiro Jonardi, born in Pittsburgh, PA, to John and Angela Jonardi, passed away on October 5, 2021 at home in Maitland, FL surrounded by family. He was 92 years old.

Ray graduated from Baldwin Township High School. He received a football scholarship to the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, IN and was a member of the 1949 National Championship Team. He graduated in 1951 with a degree in mechanical engineering and spent most of his working years at Westinghouse and retired in 1991.

He was introduced to his future wife, Diane Lawrence, by his sister, Lidia Jonardi Ludwig. Ray and Diane were married in 1957 and resided in South Park until 2013 when they moved to Maitland, FL.

Ray enjoyed sports and continued to play softball, basketball, and volleyball into his eighties. He played softball for the Penn Hills Traveling Senior Softball Team in tournaments all over the country. Ray enjoyed traveling whether it was to Notre Dame for football team and class reunions, to the annual Jonardi family reunions, or just to see more of the United States.

Ray is predeceased by his wife Diane who suffered from Alzheimer's Disease, his brother Enzo Jonardi, and his sisters Norma Mickunas and Lidia Ludwig.

He is survived by his daughter Dale (Mark) Burns, son Andrew Jonardi (Ginger Stair), grandson James Jeffrey (Chelsea) Burns, granddaughter Caryn Diane Burns (David Smiley), sister Valia Keller, his wife's cousin Shirley Martin Dudley, and numerous nieces, nephews, and friends.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you please make a donation to either the Alzheimer's Association or Alzheimer's Disease Research a program of BrightFocus Foundation.

A Celebration of Life will take place on November 6, 2021 at 4:30PM at DeGusipe Funeral Home, 9001 N. Orlando Avenue, Maitland, FL 32751

Raymond ("Jeff") Cassimiro Jonardi ~ His Story

Ray ("Jeff") was born at home in Willock (Pittsburgh) Pennsylvania during the depression. He was the fourth child and second son of John Jonardi (Giovanni Giovanardi) and Angela Terzi Jonardi who had emigrated from Poviglio, Reggio Emilia, Italy in order to have a better life for themselves and their future children.

John worked as a coal miner and after being injured in the mines, worked on the railroad. They lived in a company owned home which included the "luxury" of an outhouse and chickens in the yard. His siblings were Norma Mickunas, Enzo Jonardi, Valia Draksler Keller, and Lidia Ludwig. In order to earn money to help the family, Ray worked at various jobs throughout his youth, including at the steel mill, railroad, and setting duck pins in the bowling alley.

Ray was very athletic and played football, baseball, and track, and was a member of the Varsity Club at Baldwin Township High School. He was the treasurer of his senior class and his yearbook referred to him as "quiet and refined". His prowess on the football field earned him a football scholarship

from the University of Notre Dame. When Ray was first notified of the scholarship, his father did not want him to go. He expected him to stay home to work and earn money to support the family. Ray went against his father's wishes and enrolled at Notre Dame. Over time, his father came to appreciate the opportunity that Ray had and was proud of his achievements both academically and on the field.

When Ray arrived at Notre Dame, he wasn't sure what his major should be. When asked what he liked, he said math and science. He was then enrolled in the School of Engineering and received his Bachelors of Science in Mechanical Engineering in 1951. He always recognized and appreciated how fortunate he was to get a scholarship to Notre Dame. He was the only one in his family to go to college and the scholarship gave him not just the chance to play football but also to earn a college degree.

Ray was very proud to be a member of the Notre Dame football team and of the team's accomplishments which included the unbeaten untied 1949 National Championship team coached by the legendary Frank Leahy. He was a member of arguably one of the best college dynasties in history - though, being modest, you would never hear him say that. He sustained a serious knee injury during a practice in 1949 and his knee would bother him for the rest of his life. When he played in games during the 1950 season, his knee would swell and he would have it drained on the sidelines then go right back into the game. These were the days of leather helmets and no face guards and broken noses were not uncommon.

Ray valued the lifelong friendships he developed and always enjoyed going back to Notre Dame for the 1949 Championship Team Reunions and class of '51 reunions. In 2004, he was honored to be awarded his Notre Dame Monogram for football from Athletic Director, Kevin White. This was the result

of an effort by a few of his teammates who believed he had achieved sufficient playing time his senior year to be awarded a Monogram at that time but was somehow overlooked. The athletic department agreed and awarded him full membership in the prestigious and honored Notre Dame Monogram Club. His son, Andy, also a Notre Dame alumni, could not have been more proud to be able to attend the ceremony in person.

After graduating, Ray worked for various companies but spent the majority of his career with Westinghouse in Pittsburgh from which he retired in 1991. Ray's sister, Lidia, who also worked at Westinghouse, introduced him to one of her good friends and co-workers, Diane Lawrence. Diane was a math major Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Oberlin College and an actress. Ray and Diane dated and were married in Hartford, Connecticut on November 30, 1957. They had been married for 60 years at the time of Diane's passing in February 2018. Diane called Ray by his high school nickname - Jeff or Jeff-Ray - which could cause confusion since her family and friends called him Jeff and his family, friends, and co-workers called him Ray. There are several stories as to how the name Jeff started, one of which was based on the cartoon Mutt and Jeff. Another was a misunderstanding of the pronunciation of the Italian version of his last name - Giovanardi - which was "heard" as Jeff Jonardi.

Ray and Diane enjoyed going to the Willock Social Club to dance polkas and rumbas. Many of the "Willock Group" were from friendships that Ray had in high school and that continued on throughout his life. Once a month he would play poker with several of the men he had known in his younger years. This tradition continued for over 50 years. Diane had a lifelong love of theater and Ray was proud of her and supported her in all of her acting endeavors - theater, movies, commercials, documentaries, etc. He even got to be an "extra" in a commercial that she was filming. In turn, Diane supported Ray's love of playing sports (softball, basketball, and volleyball) which he continued into his eighties including traveling for senior softball league tournaments.

After marrying, Ray and Diane lived in an apartment in Whitehall borough, Pennsylvania, and after their daughter, Dale, was born they moved to a house on Fidelity Drive in Pittsburgh. When Diane became pregnant with their second child, their son Andrew (Andy), they moved to Ridgevue Drive in South Park. They lived in this house for over 50 years until moving to Maitland, Florida to live with Dale and her husband, Mark. Ray aka Papa, loved his grandchildren, James Jeffrey Burns and Caryn Diane Burns, and watching them grow throughout the years. He attended elementary school programs, graduations, and their weddings to their respective spouses, Chelsea and David.

He was very much a family man and looked forward to attending the annual Jonardi family reunion. The first reunion was in 1957 and, prior to COVID, reunions were held annually for 62 consecutive years. Originally, they were held in just the tri-state area of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia but have now expanded to include Florida, Maryland, Tennessee, and North Carolina. He also enjoyed spending time with Diane's extended family which included summer vacations at Point O' Woods Beach in South Lyme, Connecticut even though he considered himself a landlubber and not a beach goer. During retirement, he and Diane traveled around the United States, but some of his favorite trips were to the Western states. In his late eighties, he and Andy took a trip out to California and saw Yosemite, Sequoias, Redwoods, the Pacific Coast Highway and much more.

Ray was a true gentleman who never spoke unkindly about anyone. During Diane's decline from Alzheimer's, he visited her almost every day and became a favorite of the staff at Arden Courts Memory Care Facility where they greeted him warmly each time. Friends and family have referred to him as a pillar of strength. He always showed genuine interest, kindness, and respect to those around him even during his decline over the past several months. As

he continued to get weaker, he never complained no matter how uncomfortable he was. He greeted the caregivers who came to see him, asked their name, and when they left, shook their hand and thanked them.

Ray/Jeff/Uncle Ray/Dad/Papa was never one to seek out the spotlight, but we appreciate this opportunity to share and celebrate his life and the caring person he was. He will be forever in our hearts.

You are invited to leave a message of condolence to the family of Raymond ("Jeff") Cassimiro Jonardi.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

NOV 6. 4:30 PM (ET)

DeGusipe Funeral Home & Crematory Maitland Chapel

9001 N. Orlando Ave

Maitland, FL 32751

(407) 695-2273

todd@degusipe.com

<https://www.degusipefuneralhome.com>

Tribute Wall

SW

“ *PLAY BALL!*

Uncle Ray was a ballplayer. There are not many of them around anymore. The love of the game has lost its luster. A true ballplayer plays through pain and not being 100% good to go. His love for his teammates never ceases! They are needed for him to do what he loves and they love what he brings to the table every game. I had the distinct pleasure of being on the field with this ballplayer. What an honor! I journeyed to Dales to talk and visit with him before a Notre Dame game. He asked where my Irish shirt was!? He was sharp as a tack and a Gentleman as always right to the end. He had played his last game here on Earth. Now he is pitching to his lovely wife Diane- and he is at peace.

Much love, Sky



SKY WALKER - November 01, 2021 at 04:28 PM

KC

“ *Met Jeff & Diane while planning Baldwin High reunions. Jeff & my late husband Charlie were classmates at Baldwin. They also played football together in high school. I think we had more fun planning the reunions than the actual celebration. Jeff was a true gentleman. A good friend and I will miss his Christmas call to catch up on each others lives. Love & Hugs to his family.*

Kathryn Councilor - October 25, 2021 at 04:15 PM