



Obituary

Born: Thursday, May 6, 1937

Died: Saturday, September 27, 2014

Joel C. Paul Riegel, 77, died after a dignified and valiant battle with liver cancer on September 27, 2014 at Hospice of the Sacred Heart in Dunmore.

Born in Berwick to the late Earl and Betty Klinetob Riegel, Joel was a 1955 graduate of Berwick High School. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from Juniata College with several majors in the sciences, mathematics, natural history and Spanish.

A recipient of a Congressional appointment to the Air Force Academy in Denver, Joel would have been a member of the first graduating class had a childhood injury not prevented him from passing the rigid physical examination. He went on to receive a Masters of Science degree from Temple University and was one of the first to be awarded a National Science Foundation grant to teach "modern math".

After teaching mathematics in the Berwick School District from 1959-1967, Joel was hired as one of the twelve original Field Representatives of the Pennsylvania State Education Association. He was assigned to service the twelve counties of PSEA's northeast region and was the Regional Field Director until his retirement in 1999.

Joel was a pioneer for teachers. His devotion to his work was noted across the state and his trailblazing influence will be felt into countless generations of educators. He was uniquely involved in creating the circumstances which led to the writing of the first Collective Bargaining Law for teachers in Pennsylvania- Act 195.

A genius at the bargaining table, Joel's creative mind allowed him to negotiate contracts, which solved problems for both sides of any issue. A true believer in education at any age, his unique salary scale development accelerated faculty members to career level while at the same time requiring much continuing education on their part.

Outside of his career, Joel was active throughout his life in service organizations including the Berwick Jaycees. A lifelong member of the Elks, he organized the first BPOE Halloween Parade and assisted for many years in the building of the sets which decorate Berwick's Christmas Boulevard.

Charitable work continued after his retirement through outgrowth groups associated with veterinary work and in various regional church groups.

Service Summary

Mass of Christian Burial

11:00 AM Wed Oct 01, 2014

Basilica of St. Ann

Scranton, Pa

Although Joel's professional work kept him at center stage in his field, what he enjoyed the most was his woodworking projects, time spent with close friends and his animals. His was a quiet and unassuming generosity, which he willingly shared with anyone who needed assistance.

In August of 2014 Joel became a member of the Roman Catholic faith after attending devotions in the Church for decades. The joyous day was led by Father Daniel Schwebbs, O.S.J., who administered the Sacraments. Joel's unquestioning acceptance of God's will was a hallmark of his life and was experienced by the many who supported him through his long battle with cancer.

Joel is survived by his wife, Gloria (Bartnicki) Riegel. As her husband and best friend, his passing has created a pain beyond speech. Joel's care of and devotion to Gloria's parents was unsurpassed. His gentle and unconditional love of his wife and her family mandates eternal gratitude.

Joel is also survived by a son Brett Riegel of Stroudsburg, and a grandson, Aidan.

At his wishes, Joel's incredible life was commemorated privately with close family and friends at the Gubbiotti Funeral Home, 1030 Wyoming Ave., Exeter, followed by a Mass of Christian burial at St. Ann's Basilica in Scranton. The Mass was celebrated by Father Joe Jones, C.P., who was instrumental in sharing Joel's journey into Catholicism. A special eulogy was delivered by Kevin McDonnell on behalf of his brother, the Very Reverend Paul McDonnell, O.S.J. and the second eulogy was presented by Nancy M. Noonan a lifelong friend of the family.

Special gratitude is expressed to Father Paul for his treasured friendship. His involvement and support through many years, especially during Joel's final illness, will never be forgotten.

Gratitude is also extended to Dr. James Bruno and his staff for years of uninterrupted support through countless health crises and to the numerous doctors at the University of Pennsylvania for their instant response time and passionate attempts at lengthening life.

Donations in memory of Joel Riegel may be made to Shrine of St. Joseph, c/o Very Rev. Paul McDonnell, 544 West Cliff Drive, Santa Cruz, California 95060-6147.