



Joseph Paul Lettera

December 6, 2021

Joseph Paul Lettera, of Macungie, PA, formerly of Roslyn, NY, passed away peacefully December 6th, 2021. He celebrated 67 years of marriage as the husband of Janice M. (Boerner) Lettera. Joe was a member of St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Allentown, PA.

Born in Brooklyn, NY, Joe was the son of the late Fortunato and Josephine E. (Morabito) Lettera. A 1952 graduate of Springfield College, Springfield, MA, Joseph played varsity basketball, football and track. He served as co-captain of the football team in 1951. He served honorably in the Navy from 1952-1956 and achieved the rank of Lieutenant JG. Joe received his Masters Degree in Physical Education from Columbia University, NY in 1957.

In 1957 Joe was hired at Roslyn High School as a physical education teacher and coach. In 1989, after 32 years of dedicated service, Joe retired as Director of Athletics and Physical Education from the Roslyn Public School System. Joe served as varsity basketball coach from 1958 to 1989 leading the teams to 405 wins. He was named Nassau County Basketball "Coach of the Year" in 1973, the same year he coached Roslyn to the Nassau County North Shore Championship with a repeat in 1974. He received the Nassau County Basketball Officials Award for sportsmanship in 1983, 1984 and 1986, and Division Basketball Coach of the Year Award in 1984. Joe was named the Nassau County Athletic Administrator in 1988. In 2014 Joe was inducted into

the New York State Basketball Hall of Fame.

Nassau County Executive Francis Purcell presented a citation to Joseph for his life saving CPR efforts performed on student Mary Behan on October 19, 1979.

In retirement, Joe enjoyed woodworking, photography and traveling overseas with his wife Janice. He also treasured watching his grandchildren participate in extracurricular activities and sporting events.

Survivors: wife Janice; daughter Valerie Lettera-Spletzer and her husband Bob of Los Angeles, CA; son Paul Lettera and fiancé Angela Ricciardi of Bay Shore, NY; daughter in law Mary Wagner-Lettera of Bethlehem, PA; sister-in-law Pat Boerner of El Cajon, CA; nieces & nephews Alfred, Janet, Michael, Nancy and Robert; grandchildren: Sara Lambert and her sons Steven and Alexander Lambert of Wilson, PA and Joseph Alfred and Johanna Maria Lettera of Macungie, PA and their mother Sue Lettera.

Joe was predeceased in death by oldest son Joseph Mark Lettera of Bethlehem, PA; brothers Alfred Lettera (KIA WWII) of Brooklyn, NY, Fortunato and wife Rose Lettera, sister Viola Lettera all of Boynton Beach, FL.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held on Saturday December 11, 2021, at 10 A.M. at St. Thomas More Catholic Church 1040 Flexer Ave. Allentown. A Viewing will be held on Friday December 10, 2021 from 5 P.M. to 8 P.M and on Saturday 8:30 A.M. to 9:30 A.M. in the J.S. Burkholder Funeral Home, 1601 W. Hamilton St. Allentown.

Cemetery Details

Resurrection Cemetery

547 N. Krocks Rd.
Allentown, PA 18106

Previous Events

Viewing

DEC 10. 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

J S Burkholder Funeral Home Inc
1601 W Hamilton Street
Allentown, PA 18102
(610) 433-5161
info@jsburkholder.com
<https://jsburkholder.com>

Viewing

DEC 11. 8:30 AM - 9:30 AM (ET)

J S Burkholder Funeral Home Inc
1601 W Hamilton Street
Allentown, PA 18102
(610) 433-5161
info@jsburkholder.com
<https://jsburkholder.com>

Mass of Christian Burial

DEC 11. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Thomas More Catholic Church
1040 Flexer Ave.
Allentown, PA 18103

Tribute Wall

KB

“ Coach Lettera was a very important person in my life. I loved my time as a high school player and went on, not only to play in college and overseas, but I became a high school and college coach for many years. His lessons of taking things one day at a time have always remained with me. His concept of teamwork and team discipline were staples in how I coached my own teams. I remained in touch with my coach throughout my life and I enjoyed our conversations as we caught up on life. Getting to see him from time to time when I made my way through PA was a bonus. The most rewarding things for me as a coach has always been the ongoing relationships with my former players. I honored and respected Coach Lettera by keeping in touch with him and I sincerely hope he always knew just how important that was to me. Rest in peace, Coach. Thank you for all you have taught me as a player and the life lessons you have shared. You will be missed.

Ken Barer

Ken Barer - December 20, 2021 at 05:33 PM

JC

“ Coach, as I always called him, was an incredible coach, mentor, and a great human being. I also knew him on a personal basis. He permitted me to be his volunteer assistant for 2 years and I learned so much from him. To Janice, Valerie and Paul my heart goes out to you for your loss and you are in my prayers.

james “Peter” Croce - December 17, 2021 at 12:12 PM

RG

“ As a basketball official, it was always an honor to have refereed for Joe Lettera and his Roslyn Basketball Teams. Joe's teams were always well coached and gentlemen on and off the court. Joe respected the job officials had to do and always made it a point to greet the officials before the game and always thanked us after the games. I want to express my sincere condolences and deepest sympathies to all the Lettera family.
Roger Glazer

Roger Glazer - December 17, 2021 at 09:01 AM



“ Mr. Lettera modeled fine qualities for us all: a dedication to hard work and a passion for excellence. I am proud to have played for his freshman football team and to have been a part of his storied basketball program. My condolences to his family and many friends.
Philip Levien
Roslyn High School, Class of 1969

Philip Levien - December 10, 2021 at 01:23 PM

CL

“ Joe was the epitome of a coach/teacher/human being. He was a leader who required much but gave much. He had a lasting impact on all who interacted with him. Coach Lettera not only taught technique and strategy but demanded discipline and respect. He was the essence of strength. His display of empathy and sympathy for those who struggled was notable. Thank you, Joe, for your love and influence. RIP! Condolences to the family.
Cari Lynch '78
Tom Lynch, RHS retired coach

Cari Lynch - December 09, 2021 at 07:40 PM

CZ

“ Joe "coach" was a major influence in my life. His steadfastness, dedication, kindness and empathy were a wonderful role model as I navigated my teen years. Beyond his expertise as a basketball guru, he became a touchstone for me many years after graduation. I would make it a point to stop in to say hello whenever I found myself in the area, and had the great pleasure of talking with Joe when he was guest of honor at the class reunion attended by my wife's sister. Joe will always have a place in my memories. Please pass on my deepest sympathies to the entire extended Lettera family.

I have attached a photo here that Joe sent to me a few years ago. It is from 1967 and reflects the way I will always think of him.

*Charlie Zatzkin
class of '67*



Charles Zatzkin - December 09, 2021 at 06:15 PM

WL

“ Joe was a very special man with a big heart. He and Janice were clients of mine until they moved to Pennsylvania. His legacy is well known in the Roslyn School district as well as the community. He and Joe junior are together. Blessings to them both. May loving memories get his family and friends through this difficult time.

Wayne Lewis - December 09, 2021 at 04:33 PM

 Alan Zucker

“ A great guy and wonderful role model for a kid! I am so happy I got to see him and his wife again a few years ago when they returned to Roslyn to be inducted into the RHS Hall of Fame (or whatever the honor was called -- maybe it was a New York State Hall of Fame). In any event he was the warm and friendly man I remembered from the early 1960's. My best to the family -- Alan (Buzz) Zucker RHS '64 and basketball manager for three years

Alan Zucker - December 09, 2021 at 01:28 PM

IL

“ The year 1963 I was a senior and basketball manager he was likes father to me coach rest in peace

Irwin levinson - December 09, 2021 at 01:19 PM

TN

“ In memory of Mr Joe Lettera,
His legacy in Roslyn High School will live on.
My condolences to his family.
Tina L. Nelkin (Class of 1975)

Tina L. Nelkin - December 09, 2021 at 12:48 PM

D(

“ Rest In Eternal Peace Mr. Lettera. You were the inspiration of many the Roslyn High class of 1963, especially myself. I took your advice by joining the U.S. A.F directly after graduation.

David A. Rapelyea (Junior) - December 09, 2021 at 12:41 PM

RW

“ *What a wonderful legacy. For the short time I played varsity basketball I was a bench sitter. So I had a pretty good view of his coaching style. He was tough but fair. Respected by all around. A man of great integrity. Thank you Joe.*

Ron Weil class of 65.

ron weil - December 09, 2021 at 12:37 PM

KS

“ *My family was very saddened to read of Joe's passing. The friendship dates back to "the old neighborhood" in Brooklyn NY, and out to Long Island and beyond. It was a special treat on a Friday after school in the early 60s to drive out with my Dad to attend a Roslyn football game. There were many other family get togethers including the first Super Bowl. We shared a special time when one year, as a season ticket holder at Boston College, I got tickets for a BC-Army game at West Point on Veterans Day. Both Joe & Dad were Navy veterans. On a business trip to California, I had a very pleasant evening at dinner with both Joe & Janice and reminisced looking at scrapbooks. Our love, thoughts and prayers to all the family. We will miss Joe's smile, laugh and always having a good word to say.*

Karen Simon (for the Simon Family)

Karen Simon - December 09, 2021 at 10:36 AM



“ *Serene Reflections Bouquet was purchased for the family of Joseph Paul Lettera.*



December 08, 2021 at 08:32 PM

VL

“ 2 files added to the album *Retirement Years*



Valerie Lettera-Spletzer - December 08, 2021 at 05:43 PM

VL

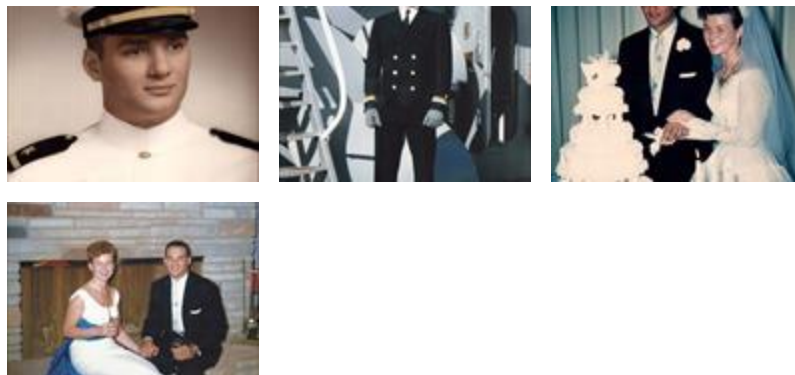
“ 3 files added to the album *Life in Roslyn*



Valerie Lettera-Spletzer - December 08, 2021 at 05:40 PM

VL

“ 4 files added to the album *The Early Years*



Valerie Lettera-Spletzer - December 08, 2021 at 05:19 PM

VL

“ 6 files added to the album Roslyn Basketball



Valerie Lettera-Spletzer - December 08, 2021 at 03:56 PM

AR

“ I remember coach Lettera pacing, kneeling and shouting on the sidelines of the Roslyn HS Basketball games. But in the school hallways he always had a smile on his face and was a very nice man. I'm so proud to know his family for so long and to have such fond memories.

Angela Ricciardi - December 08, 2021 at 01:02 PM

RG

I graduated Roslyn High School in 1970 and had the great honor of being coached by Mr. Lettera. He also coached my younger brother, Michael, now deceased. Besides Mr. Lettera's obvious talent, knowledge and skill as a basketball coach, what stood out for me was how even keel he was. He was always fair and condemned cited himself with the highest degree of integrity. He was also very kind to me and to my brother. He taught me a lot about achievement, fairness, compassion and trying to do things the right way. I'm not sure he knew what a great effect he had on me. I am a better person because of knowing him and having the honor of being one of his students.

May he Rest In Peace. His memory will always be a blessing to me.

My heartfelt condolences to Mr. Lettera's whole family.

RICHARD GREENBERG - December 08, 2021 at 04:16 PM

JO

I Roslyn 1971 and was so lucky to have played for him. He was always such a big part of Roslyn. I think i was first aware of him as a young kid when we first lived at the garden apartments an oneof my neighbors was Howie Cion who played for Roslyn. Going to Roslyn games in the early 60s you could see how he was held in such high esteem. Think he was always part of my life. Over the last twenty years i am so lucky to say i have really gotten to know him and we have become good friends. Will really miss him hes a great man love this man.

Jon Ostrow - December 08, 2021 at 07:20 PM

GF

Coach played an instrumental part in my growth as a player and human being. He was fair, honest and a man of integrity. No one ever said he wasn't tough on the basketball court always demanding the best of his players so they could be their best. He cared about all of us, every player in every year he coached. God bless Coach and thank you.

Gene Friedlander - December 09, 2021 at 10:32 AM

TG

I'm a graduate of the Class of 1976. I had the pleasure of working with Coach Lettera through the Boys Athletic Association. When I wasn't in class I was in his Office and we were always running ideas by each other involving sports in Roslyn. He always had the time to talk and always had a smile on his face. He taught me a lot of what it was like to run an Athletic program and no doubt prepared me well for college and the future after college. 40 years plus I still go back to things he told me. My condolences to his wife Janice, Valerie who I went to high school with and the rest of his family. He was a great man.

Thomas Gaynor (Roslyn Class of 76)

Thomas Gaynor - December 09, 2021 at 11:25 AM



Jon Wilner

Joe Lettera was, and will always be, a legend at Roslyn High School.

RIP, Mr. Lettera.

Jon Wilner (Roslyn HS, Class of '63)

Jon Wilner - December 09, 2021 at 12:22 PM



RW

It is a sad day because Joe Lettera was a once-in-a-lifetime person. A hero in many ways big and small. So good and so consistent. I am sure that he is coaching a bigger team now.

You were loved and will always be remembered for the many lives you touched including mine.

Robert Weissman - December 09, 2021 at 12:30 PM



G1

Always a kind gentleman. Loved his students and players. The world has lost its best. Remembering your kindness to all us Greenvale kids. I think you saw who we were since we came from the same place ❤️



Ginny Ziccardi Class of 1962 - December 09, 2021 at 12:42 PM



W'

Even though I was not an athlete (spent most of time in the wind band), I knew that Mr. Lettera was always "there" for us. He was strict with us, made us into better people. A teacher's influence lasts long after his teaching days are over. RIP, Mr. Lettera

Warren Rubin '63 - December 09, 2021 at 01:53 PM



JF

Mr. Lettera was my favorite gym teacher at Roslyn. I had him in 7th or 8th grade. He was a very nice man.

Jamie Frank class of 1970

Jamie Frank - December 09, 2021 at 03:10 PM

KW

*Dear Janice, Valerie and Paul,
There are many wonderful tributes to Joe, his teaching, coaching and friendship all well deserved. Of course, I have so many memories of our family's friendship in Roslyn. Our family sends there love and blessings to you all.*

Karen Witzig Walter, Nancy and Gayle

Karen Walter - December 10, 2021 at 08:32 PM

AC

Joe Lettera and his family were my backyard neighbors in Roslyn since our moving there in 1974. No finer people can be found anywhere. We're saddened to hear of his demise. Sympathy and blessing to his family.

Anthony Cellini

Anthony V. Cellini - December 11, 2021 at 08:42 AM

TK

Coach Lettera always treated me with respect. His Gym classes were very important to me. He always made me feel that I mattered. A really great guy. Ted Kulze 67'.

ted kulze - December 13, 2021 at 01:36 PM