

OBITUARIES

FEB. 19, 1935 – FEB. 11, 2025

Danny DiLiberto, 89, West Sider became world billiards champ

Danny DiLiberto, who came up from Buffalo's West Side to become a world champion billiard player four times over, wasn't allowed to set foot in a pool hall as a kid. His parents forbade it.

Nevertheless, he found the game irresistible, more than baseball, boxing or bowling, the other sports where he excelled.

"His fascination with pool," Buffalo News sportswriter Bob Feeney observed in 1977, "stems from his older brother's ability to turn a 9-ball into a \$5 bill."

In the early 1960s, after bowling a 300 game one afternoon at Connecticut Lanes on Connecticut Street, he followed up that night on the third-floor pool tables by running off 200 balls.

It wasn't long before he hit the road, winning major tournaments, giving exhibitions and playing in money games across the country. He said he once took \$1,200 in a game from the legendary Minnesota Fats.

In 1973, the year after he beat the best players in the nation at the fabled "Hustlers Jamboree" tournament in Johnston City, Ill., he told News sportswriter Steve Weller, "I was the top money-winner in the

country last year, and I only won \$12,000 I could talk about."

Mr. DiLiberto's biographer, pool journalist Jerry Forsyth, wrote after his death, "Danny made his living in the local bars and pool rooms. He lived on the edge for much of his life, with his ability to afford dinner and a hotel room often dependent upon his ability to pocket balls earlier in the day."

It wasn't until he stepped away from constant competition that he held the closest thing he ever had to a steady job. In 1989, he became a popular commentator for Accu-Stats Video Productions for games on the Pool Network. Teamed with another pro player, Billie Incardona, a longtime friend, he kept at it until 2020.

Inducted into five halls of fame, he died Feb. 11 in a rehabilitation center in Cape Coral, Fla., after a period of declining health. He was nine days short of his 90th birthday.

The son of John DiLiberto, a Teamsters Union member, and Rose DiGiacomo DiLiberto, Daniel Anthony DiLiberto was an outstanding baseball player at Canisius High School, where he graduated in 1952. Renowned for his powerful throws from the outfield, he went on to play



Class AA Muny baseball and years later won bets by tossing golf balls across a 330-foot-wide river.

After two years at the University of Buffalo, holding forth at the pool tables in the student union, he went to Florida to break into boxing, which his parents also disapproved. He hooked up with Angelo Dundee, the trainer who later groomed Muhammad Ali.

Fighting under the name Danny "Kid" Toriani, an alias to keep his father from finding out, his secret lasted only until his first bout. Friends of his family in the crowd recognized him. Getting grudging approval from his father, he went undefeated in 14 matches in the lightweight division, winning 12 by knockout, but broke his hands four times and had to give up.

"If it weren't for his brittle hands," Dundee told an interviewer,

"he would have been a champion."

Mr. DiLiberto served a stint in the Army and came back to Buffalo. When he won the city pocket billiards tournament in 1961, the sports pages were still calling him a boxer/bowler.

He worked as a bartender, sold kitchenware door to door and conned his way into a draftsman job. He also was the New York State straight pool champion in 1962. Before long, he moved back to Florida.

His first major victory came in the 1963 U.S. Masters Straight Pool championship, which he won again in 1969. After taking the straight pool and all-around championships in Johnston City in 1972, he was ranked among the best.

Through the early 1980s, Mr. DiLiberto won or was runner-up in many state and national tournaments. With his success in one-pocket division of the World Championships of Pocket Billiards in Tampa, Fla., in 1983, he became the first person to win tournaments in four divisions of professional billiards – straight pool, eight-ball, nine-ball and one pocket.

In 1997, he was ranked as the top senior pool player in the world. His last major wins came in the French

National Nine Ball Tournament in 1997 and 1998.

He was inducted into the One Pocket Hall of Fame, the Billiard Congress of America Hall of Fame, the Straight Pool Hall of Fame, the Buffalo Boxing Hall of Fame and the Buffalo Sports Hall of Fame.

He was the subject of a Sports Illustrated cover story in 1977. Jerry Forsyth collected his tales in a book, "Road Player: The Danny DiLiberto Story," published in 2005.

He returned to his hometown regularly for tournaments and exhibitions. One of his appearances pitted him against Buffalo Bills place-kicker John Leyboldt in 1973 in the former Hippodrome Billiard Academy on Main Street. He also coached up-and-coming players, including Stefan Cohen from France, who won the straight pool world championship in 2009.

Survivors include a son, Zack; three daughters, Angela DiLiberto, Amber DiLiberto and Jeanette Fletcher; and six grandchildren. His wife of 29 years, the former Geraldine Meck, died in 2020.

A celebration of his life is being planned for July in Buffalo.

Email danderson@buffnews.com.

**Horbett, Audrey A.**

Jan 25, 1937 - Feb 21, 2025

Of West Seneca, NY. Beloved daughter of the late Edward C. and Wanda Horbett, Sr.; loving sister of Edward C. (Beth Sundheim) Horbett, Jr., Thomas (Pamm) Horbett, Judith (James) Hauck, and William (late Christine) (Hayley) Horbett, Sr.; dear aunt of William (Hiromi) Horbett, Jr., Ellen (John) Kahle and the late James Horbett; cherished great-aunt of Aya Christine, Jack and James Horbett, Owen and Linden Kahle. Audrey retired from a lifelong career at the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library and was a proud member of the Buffalo Ornithological Society. Relatives and friends may visit Hoy Funeral Home, 3855 Seneca St., West Seneca, NY on Wednesday, March 5th from 3-7PM. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated in Queen of Heaven Church, West Seneca on Thursday, March 6th at 9 AM. Entombment Holy Cross Cemetery. In lieu of flowers please donate in Audrey's memory to <https://ways2give.buffalolib.org/page.aspx?pid=382>. Online condolences may be made at www.HOYFUNERALHOME.com

**Horstmann, Barbara E.**

Entered into heaven at the Niagara Hospice House. Born in Syracuse NY, she was the daughter of the late Henry and Charlotte (Towle) Horstmann. Barbara was always optimistic, free spirited and a peacekeeper. She was a super loving mother and adored her grandsons. She graduated from Buffalo State College and Universities in Mexico for Spanish, where she had degrees in nutrition, psychology, special education and speech pathology. Barbara worked for the Buffalo school system as a Speech pathologist where she was the only bilingual speech pathologist at that time. She was a loving mom to her dogs. She is the beloved mother of Sara (Dale) Rosado-Page. Cherished grandmother of Josue "JR" and Rafael. Loving sister of Molly (Chris) Shanto and Mandy (Mark) Rice. Also survived by nieces and nephews and several cousins. In lieu of flowers, please make donations to World Central Kitchen. A Celebration of Barbara's Life will be held March 8th 2025 at 11:00 am at the Knox Evangelical Presbyterian Church, 2595 Elmwood Ave., Kenmore NY 14217.

**Iggers, Dr. Wilma (nee Abeles)**

Mar 23, 1921 - Feb 24, 2025

Age 103. Beloved wife of the late Dr. Georg Iggers; loving mother of Jeremy (Carol), Daniel (Janet) and Karl Jonathan Iggers; sister of the late Dr. Marianne Ferber, grandmother of Sarah (Phil), Micha, Kelly (Eric) and Adam (Stephanie); great-grandmother of Kyra, Ivy, Mabel, Theodore and Scarlett. Special thanks to her friends and helpers, Denise McCoy and Bill VanStone. A memorial service will be held Tuesday, 12 p.m., at MESNEKOFF FUNERAL HOME, 8630 Transit Rd., E. Amherst, NY 14051. In lieu of flowers, Memorials may be made to Philander Smith University or a charity of one's choice. Share condolences, view live stream, and to read more information at mesnekoff.com

In
Remembrance

**Johnson, Geraldine L. "Gerry"**

Feb 20, 2025

Beloved wife of Donald R. Johnson and the late Randy Nowak; loving mother of Juliette (Gary) Smith and Carisa (Richard) Avalos; cherished grandmother of Giana and Cora Smith, Tyler and Natalya Avalos; stepmother of Barbara (Carlos), Rachel (Benjamin) and John (Marie Howe) and survived by their children Linda, David, Wesley, Emilio, Sage, Marley and Remy; sister of Arlene (late William O'Connor and late Peter) Manzella and the late Daniel (survived by Pamela) Swiatek and Diane (survived by Robert) Gaczewski; also survived by numerous nieces and nephews. Gerry loved spending time with her family and friends, her cats and dogs, walking, hiking, playing volleyball, skiing, traveling, dancing, and going to Buffalo Bills games. She was an avid bicyclist and was a former member of Big Wheels Bicycle Club. She rode in a number of charity events including the Ride for Roswell. She enjoyed watching her daughters swim competitively and volunteered at meets to time and officiate. She closely followed her grandchildren as they competed in organized sports including swimming. She volunteered briefly at Crisis Services, Meals on Wheels, and Paws for Love with her husband and golden retriever Brodie. She graduated with her bachelors in accounting from UB at the age of 55 and worked 15+ years at Blue Cross & Blue Shield. Honoring Jerry's wishes there will be no services. Arrangements by JAMES E. GRACE FUNERAL HOME, INC.

Kellner, Paul

Sep 1, 1967 - Feb 25, 2025

Of Alden, NY. Please contact Erie County Dept. of Social Svcs. - Burial Unit at 716-858-1872 by March 11th.

**Kelly, Ruth (nee Schulick)**

Mar 14, 1930 - Feb 19, 2025

Ruth was born and raised in Syracuse, NY. She spent most of her life there. She is predeceased by her husband, Robert (1996). They were married for 43 years. After raising children, Ruth held many jobs. She worked for the telephone company as a phone operator, financial aid adviser with Onondaga Community College and was a town clerk for a time. Her favorite job was working in a physician's office until her retirement. At that time, she moved up to Buffalo, NY to be closer to family. She was a devoted grandmother. Ruth is survived by daughters Susan Smith, Colleen Foster, Kathleen Elliott (Steve) and son Thomas Kelly (Lisa), a niece, Sheila Mourin, as well as 10 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. No prior visitation. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at St. Mary's Church, 6919 Transit Rd., Swormville, NY 14051 on Saturday, May 3, 2025, at 11am. Please assemble at church. Flowers gratefully declined. If desired, contributions in Ruth's memory may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Pl., Memphis, TN 38105. Online condolences may be offered at www.denglerrobertsperna-funeral.com

**Kennelly, Anne**

Feb 26, 2025

Beloved wife of the late William J. Kennelly. Devoted mother of Kathleen (Dennis) Pawlikowski, Margaret (Michael) Gianadda and William A. (Kelly) Kennelly. Cherished grandmother of Patrick (Cassie) Kennelly, Tara (Tom) Lusk, Sean (Fiancé Alex) Kennelly, Michael, Olivia, Carly Gianadda and great grandmother of Lucy Rose Kennelly. Dear Sister of Hubert, Alois and the late Theresia, Rita, Anton and Friedrich. Also survived by many nieces and nephews. The family will receive friends at the C. Mertz and Son Funeral Home, Inc., 911 Englewood Ave., Friday, March 7th from 4-7 PM. All are invited to attend a Mass of Christian Burial at St. John the Baptist Church, 1085 Englewood Ave. Saturday, March 8th at 11:00 AM. In lieu of flowers donations in Anne's memory to Hospice Foundation of WNY. Please share condolences at www.mertzfh.com

*"When someone
you love becomes
a memory, that
memory becomes
a treasure."*

ANONYMOUS

**Lennox, Carol E. (nee Sinatra)**

Mar 19, 1963 - Feb 24, 2025

Of Wheatfield, age 61. A source of love and light to all who knew her, Carol is predeceased by her beloved daughter, Amanda Lennox, and two angel daughters, Carmel and Melissa, who were called to Heaven before being born. The daughter of the late Jack and Nancy Sinatra, she is survived by her husband, Richard Lennox; grandchildren Kaleb and Savannah Federico; sisters Nancy (Michael) Harms, Jill (Susan) Sinatra, Catherine (William) Becroft, and brothers Jack (Nina) and Gregg Sinatra; 15 nieces and nephews, 18 great nieces and nephews as well as other cherished relatives, neighbors, and friends. A longtime employee of the University at Buffalo, Carol notably received the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in 2016. Outside of work, Carol was widely known as a compassionate, supportive, cheerful, and strong woman. She will be dearly missed by her family and friends, whose lives she touched and improved with her extraordinary kindness and warmth. Her passing follows a long, heroic, and courageous battle with cancer, throughout which Carol strived to live every day to its fullest. The family will be present Saturday, March 8, 2025 from 10 AM to 12 PM at the (Tonawanda Chapel) AMIGONE FUNERAL HOME, INC., 2600 Sheridan Dr. (at Parker Blvd.), where a Funeral Service will be celebrated at 12 PM. Interment held privately. In lieu of flowers please make a donation in Carol's memory to the Niagara or Erie County SPCA. Share condolences at www.AMIGONE.com



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those you have loved,
cherished or miss.
go.buffalonews.com/keepsakes*

THE BUFFALO NEWS



*"Those we love can never
be more than a thought
away, for as long as
there's a memory, they
live in our hearts to stay."*

ANONYMOUS