



P. Joseph Grata

January 18, 1944 - June 27, 2022

P. Joseph Grata, of Belle Vernon (Washington Twp.), a longtime journalist, Belle Vernon Area School Board member, and community leader, died of cancer on Monday, June 27, 2022 at his home in Lynnwood, Washington Township. He was 78. Mr. Grata, known simply as Joe, built a reputation as the country's premiere transportation reporter in a career that spanned 50 years and more than 10,000 articles. He covered the behind-the-scenes politics of transportation agencies, such as the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, delving into their finances, safety, operations, policy, and management. His stories and columns explored transportation from highway tragedies to rusted bridges, from transit problems to illegal activities. His work took him across the United States, Canada, and Europe. He rode most rail transit systems in North America and many in Europe. His expertise was such that he frequently was asked to speak at conferences and in the broadcast media. Mr. Grata won nine Keystone Press Association awards. The local chapters of the Pennsylvania Society of Engineers and the American Society of Civil Engineers also honored him for outstanding journalism contributions. Mr. Grata, a graduate of Penn State University, began his career during college when he combined his loves of writing and sports. At Penn State, he was sports editor of the Daily Collegian, worked in the sports information office, and hosted a sports radio talk show. He also wrote for the former Valley Independent and Latrobe Bulletin where he took his first full-time job. In 1971, he joined the staff of the former Pittsburgh Press, where he honed his expertise

in transportation matters. He later joined the staff of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette where his work included a weekly column, "Grata's Guide: Getting Around," which appeared in the Sunday editions. For 20 years, Grata handled the written play-by-play record as part of the official NCAA football stats crews at Penn State and later at the University of Pittsburgh. After retiring in 2008, Mr. Grata wrote a weekly column, "persona non grata," for the local The Valley Independent and later The Mon Valley Independent. He was a contributor to Pittsburgh Magazine, among others. In January, Mr. Grata received the Paul Harris Award, from Rotary's Belle Vernon Chapter. The honor recognizes individuals who exemplify Rotary's highest ideal: service about self. In 1983, he was named Citizen of the Year by the same chapter. Mr. Grata was first elected to the Belle Vernon Area School Board in 1969, and he served for six years. After retirement, he again won a seat on the board, a position he has held since 2009. He also was a Democratic committeeman, and since 2010, has served as Fayette County's representative to the Southwestern PA Commission, the region's transportation planning agency. In 1999, Mr. Grata was a founding member of the Belle Vernon Area Football Hall of Fame, and in 2007 he was inducted, in recognition of his decades of support for program. In 2017, he organized and co-chaired the 50th anniversary gala which marked the merger of the former Bellmar and Rostraver school districts into Belle Vernon Area School District. The event served to launch the BVA Charitable Foundation for which Mr. Grata was founder and first chairman. The non-profit promotes academics, the arts, activities and athletics with grants, scholarships, educational programs and other activities for the school and community. To date, it has raised more than \$100,000. During his lifetime, Mr. Grata served on the boards of his local municipal authority, ambulance service, recreation board, and BVA Boosters Club. He was a charter member and director of the Donald Asmonga Foundation that honors outstanding BVA High School athletes with scholarships. In addition to his work and community activities, Mr. Grata was an avid gardener, bicyclist, world traveler, and, foremost, patriarch of his family. Mr. Grata was preceded in death by his

father, Paul Grata, Sr., who was killed in action aboard the USS Franklin during World War II, and his stepfather, Edward Tegel. He is survived by his mother Joan (Netspoon) Grata Tegel, three sisters and brothers-in-law Anne and Donald Sweany of Belle Vernon, Lillian and Neil Gelotti, of Fayette City, and Joan and Alex Romansky, of Rostraver; nephews and nieces, Jon (Emily) Sweany, of Unity, Jared Sweany, of Sewickley, Lauren (Terry) Childs, of Belle Vernon, Lisa Gelotti, of Brookline; great nieces and nephews, Natali and Nathaniel Sweany and Riley and Lucas Childs. Friends will be received on Friday, July 1, 2022 from 2 to 5 P.M. in the Ferguson Funeral Home and Crematory, 700 Broad Avenue, Belle Vernon. 724-929-5300 www.FergusonFuneralHomeandCrematory.com. A private blessing service, for the immediate family only, will begin at 5 P.M. Friday. Interment will be in Belle Vernon Cemetery. A very special thank you to Joanie Holets for her kindness and compassion to Joe and his family. If desired, in lieu of flowers, donations may be made to your local Lions Club, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh or the Belle Vernon Area Charitable Fund.

Cemetery Details

Belle Vernon Cemetery

1000 Broad Avenue
Belle Vernon, PA 15012

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 1. 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (ET)

Ferguson Funeral Home and Crematory, Inc.
700 Broad Avenue
Belle Vernon, PA 15012
(724) 929-5300

Tribute Wall

TC

“ I remember a small cartoon in your office at CAS it was a SNOOPY that had a caption "JOE COOL" ... you always said "" when its time to work its time to work and when its time to party then its time to party""

May you Rest in Peace, Joe

sincerely

Thomas David Carter

thomas david carter - July 09, 2022 at 04:36 PM

PG

“ I always looked forward to my dad passing along the letters and snippets from "Cousin Joe". You were a thoughtful and caring man, always welcoming and full of wonderful stories. It saddens me that we'll no longer have those stories but I'm forever thankful of the few times we connected in person. You not only made my trip to Pittsburgh memorable but you made it possible and you'll continue to live on through the many causes you started and supported over the years. Thank you for everything!



Paul Grata - July 02, 2022 at 12:43 PM

DM

“ I always enjoyed talking and discussing many valley, educational, and interesting topics with Joe. Joe's love for this community was shown through his devotion and dedication. His columns were informational, as well as enjoyable. My deepest sympathies and prayers for his family. To you, Joe, I will drink a cold one. Rest in peace.

Debbie Mascara

Debbie Mascara - July 02, 2022 at 11:06 AM

JG

“ I finally got to meet cousin Joe after years of hearing about him from my dad. He always said I had to meet him and was he ever right. What a great guy he was. He treated us like old friends even though we only visited a few times. He and his mother were so gracious, always opening their home to us and reminiscing about family. He was always eager to show off his hometown and I got the feeling he knew pretty much everybody! Reading this page, I'm amazed at his accomplishments but not at all surprised. What a life. I regret not meeting him sooner for sure. He will be missed. Deepest sympathy to his dear mother.

*Joe P. Grata
Readyville, TN*

Joseph P Grata - July 01, 2022 at 08:14 PM

GS

“ I'm so sorry to hear of your loss. Sending my deepest and more heartfelt sympathy to the family.

Georgette (Koneffko) Starnes - July 01, 2022 at 04:27 PM

SR

“ Deepest condolences. We are happy to have known Joe. He was always a giving and kind individual. He was knowledgeable and insightful about many issues. I often enjoyed our conversations. He will be sorely missed by many.

Sheryl & Peter Resnick

Sheryl Resnick - July 01, 2022 at 03:37 PM

NC

“ To our dear friend, Joe Grata, thank you for all that you have given to our family, the our community. You have been a true leader and friend and will be deeply missed. God Bless You. Bernice Asmonga

Nancy Asmonga Colleton - July 01, 2022 at 11:32 AM

JG

“ Sorry we couldn't get up there, sincerest condolences to Aunt Joan and the rest of your family. Our lives were richer having you and Joe in them, although not as often as we should have. He fought all the way. With love always, John and Anne.

John and Anne Grata - July 01, 2022 at 11:26 AM



“ Small Garden Dish was purchased for the family of P. Joseph Grata.



July 01, 2022 at 10:48 AM

MH

“ I am so very sorry to hear about Joe. He and Larry Doyle were great friends and mentors to me when I was a high school student starting my journalism career in the Mon Valley 55 years ago. He was a good man and friend who dedicated his life to his family, his community and his readers. Rest in Peace Joe. My prayers and deepest sympathy to your family.

Michael Hasch

Michael Hasch - July 01, 2022 at 07:27 AM

MS

“ Our deepest sympathies to Joe's family. Our memories of Joe at The Press, Post-Gazette and in conversations afterward are warm. He was a very nice man who always had time to chat and offer knowledge and assistance. We were privileged to know him. Rest in peace, Joe. Rick and Margi Shrum

Margi Shrum - June 30, 2022 at 07:57 AM

AP

“ Aunt Pat lit a candle in memory of P. Joseph Grata



Aunt Pat - June 29, 2022 at 06:18 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of P. Joseph Grata.



June 29, 2022 at 12:57 PM



“ Joe deserves all of the accolades he has received. It was a privilege to share at The Valley Independent in the start of his successful career. And I am still in awe of all of his accomplishments.
Ruth Ann Yatsko

Ruth Yatsko - June 29, 2022 at 10:33 AM



“ God Bless You, Joe Grata & condolences to your family.
You will be missed for your expertise & conformity to the facts. You always told “the truth, the whole truth & nothing but the truth”.



Christine Coates - June 29, 2022 at 08:08 AM



“ I worked with Joe at the Post-Gazette. To say he was a fine man and an excellent journalist would be an understatement. May he RIP -- and may his memories sustain you in these difficult times. --
Pete Zapadka

Pete Zapadka - June 28, 2022 at 10:31 PM

RM

“ I had many great discussions with Joe at the old Firemen's Lounge in Fairhope. Back in the day. We solved a lot of the world's problems. Lol. He was a great conversationist and one of the most knowledgeable people I knew. I Very much enjoyed his newspaper columns too. Very sad to hear of his passing.

Ron Minor

Ron Minor - June 28, 2022 at 05:47 PM

SC

“ To Joe's mother and family deepest condolences and sympathy Joe was a great friend of ours and will be sadly missed Jim and Sally Triggiani Coda and Family

Sally and Jim Coda - June 28, 2022 at 04:06 PM



“ A sympathy card was purchased for the family of P. Joseph Grata.



June 28, 2022 at 02:00 PM

JA

“ There'll never be another "Joe".....he was simply THE BEST!

JUDITH ARROW - June 28, 2022 at 01:44 PM

JV

“ *Always a pleasure to be around Joe.
Rest in peace.
Betty & Jack Ventura
Ashburn, VA*

JOHN vENTURA - June 28, 2022 at 01:06 PM

KP

Our deepest condolences to Joe's family. I was not able to come to the funeral home due to a medical problem. But he was a person who was always able to provide ways to help when he felt it was necessary to keep a project going. There were many times he helped me. He got my first article published in the Pittsburgh Press and provided the base for the Community Ambulance Service. May he rest in peace.

Karl Polacek - July 01, 2022 at 10:52 PM