



## Frank Joseph Cocuzza

May 10, 2025

Frank Joseph Cocuzza, 82, passed away peacefully at his home in Oradell, New Jersey, on May 10, 2025.

Frank is survived by his beloved wife of 42 years, Tina Segali; devoted daughter, Francesca, son-in-law, Nico Gurian, and granddaughter, Isabel; cherished brother Charles and his wife, Rosalind; and loving sister Anne and her husband, Jeffrey Sabloff. He is also survived by his dear brothers- and sisters-in-law, eleven nieces and nephews, and treasured friends from all the phases of his life.

Born October 19, 1942, in Newark, New Jersey, to Charles A. Cocuzza and Grace Cocuzza (née Valente), Frank was the second of three children. Frank graduated from Irvington High School, received a bachelor's degree from Upsala College, and went on to earn a master's degree.

A natural born educator, Frank began his career teaching English at Memorial High School in West New York, New Jersey. His 20-year tenure there was interrupted only by two years of honorable service in the U.S. Army. Upon returning to Memorial, he established himself as a singular presence in the English Department and, for a time, served as president of the local teachers' union. Frank's commitment to organized labor led him to the second chapter of his career as a field representative for the New Jersey Education

Association, where he spent the next 20 years advocating for public school teachers in the state. Ever curious, multi-talented, and fair-minded, he later entered a third chapter in his career as a mediator and arbitrator, a position he held for a decade and for which he garnered deep respect from all parties who appeared before him.

Frank was one-of-a-kind—a man equally happy discussing a scene from Hamlet as he was watching his beloved Yankees or tinkering on a project at his workbench or in his backyard. As a teacher, he had a unique ability to bring works of literature to life, and he often ran into former students who would recall the profound impact he had made on their lives. He was passionate in the face of injustice and was not afraid to say so. Perhaps no better example was his campaign for public office in West New York in 1979 against an entrenched incumbent politician. Frank lost, but his point was made.

Frank was an avid golfer and experienced many hours of joy on the golf course with his brother, son-in-law, nephews, and close friends—cigar in hand and a joke at the ready. He traveled extensively throughout Italy and elsewhere on trips that will forever remain a source of treasured memories for his family and friends who joined him. Frank was also a gifted storyteller, both around the dinner table and, later in life, on paper, having authored a collection of short stories drawing from his life experiences and exploring issues of class, politics, friendship, and family.

Frank married Tina in 1983, and they welcomed their daughter, Francesca, in 1989. Frank was Tina's constant companion and North Star; he made her and Francesca laugh and feel his love every day.

Family and friends will be received on Wednesday, May 14, 2025 from 2-6 pm at Volk Leber Funeral Home, 268 Kinderkamack Road in Oradell, NJ. In lieu of

flowers, please consider a donation to the American Labor Museum, a museum close to Frank's heart for which he served as trustee and Vice President of the Board, and which is dedicated to preserving the history of workers and the labor movement.

For more information or to visit Frank's tribute page, please visit [www.vokleber.com](http://www.vokleber.com)

# Previous Events

## Visitation

MAY **14**. 2:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

Volk Leber Funeral Home  
268 Kinderkamack Road  
Oradell, NJ 07649  
info@volkleber.com  
<http://volkleberfuneralhome.com>

# Tribute Wall

PS

“ Frank was my English teacher and an advisor to a club I attended in MHS. He exuded an excitement and love for life that was infectious. I pursued teaching partly because i wanted to have a similar impact on others as he did. Later, I returned to MHS as a teacher and we became colleagues. Frank was and is a gentle soul. I am so glad I got to know him. Good Journey! Peter Schwartz

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**Peter Schwartz** - June 26 at 02:35 PM

SW

“ Mr cocuzza was probably one of the most memorable if not the most memorable of all my high school teachers. He embodied Shakespeare in my honors English 12th grade class. He made it so enjoyable and unforgettable. It was like he was acting out the characters in each play for us. It made it easy to understand Shakespearean English. He was an incredibly talented man. I was his student in 1977 my senior year at Memorial high school. I wish I had seen him again later in life to tell him how I appreciated him. He will be missed.

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**SAM WANIS** - March 06 at 03:18 PM

PT

“ It was wonderful to be in his Honors English/Shakespeare class, late 70's. Such a passionate, gifted teacher. I still laugh remembering him asking if I was Madame Defarge when I was knitting in class. Condolences, and wishing all his loved ones peace in fond remembrance.

*Ann T. Perez*

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**Perez Ann T.** - June 14, 2025 at 09:05 PM

SW

*He was amazing!!!  
I still remember him reading Shakespeare to us at the front of the  
classroom back in 1977!! Honors 12 grade English!!!  
Incredibly talented man!!  
I will always remember him.*

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**SAM WANIS** - March 06 at 09:53 AM

PC

“ Dear Mrs. Cocuzza,  
I just found out about Mr. Cocuzza from a mutual friend, Wayne Cook. May you and your daughter be comforted by many happy memories of Mr. Cocuzza. I remember learning a lot from you as my Spanish teacher. Thank you.

*I am because he is. Mr. Cocuzza is a once-in-a-generation teacher who is worth more than his weight in gold. His passion for his students, his subjects of expertise were off the chart. Other than band, which enabled me to become an Army Bandsman and retire as an Army National Guard Bandsman, his was the class at Memorial High School that I most enthusiastically looked forward to. He made his lectures come alive by providing a riveting historical framework of whatever literature he was sharing with us. He taught me how to write a term paper. He was a role model. He is not long gone because he is in our hearts and minds forever. Besides, the Divine Clockmaker that he taught us about, as The Youngbloods most famous song says:*

*"Some may come and some may go  
He will surely pass  
When the one that left us here  
Returns for us at last..."*

*Fraternally,  
Patrick Cullen  
WNY Town Historian  
Museum of the  
WNY Public Library  
Author: 1780 Battle of the Blockhouse of North Bergen, NJ  
The History of West New York, NJ*

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**Patrick Cullen** - May 21, 2025 at 10:09 AM

NC

“ It was that Shakespeare class he taught that turned me into a lifelong reader. I can't thank him enough for teaching a Cuban girl all about an amazing English writer she had heard about and through him, became a fan of all things English. Here's to you! RIP. Hope you're being your old Falstaff self up there.

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**Nora Torres (née) Calienes** - May 15, 2025 at 01:37 PM

DG

“ Mr. Cocuzza was my English Honors and Shakespeare teacher at Memorial High School between 1976 and 1980. I wrote a novel recently; it was just published in April. In my acknowledgments I mentioned Mr. Cocuzza as one of those teachers who changed my life. He had the greatest sense of humor and taught his students to love literature, discovery, and Shakespeare. He was one of the reasons I went to Barnard College. Later in life, when I was a lawyer, I argued a case where he was the arbitrator. When it was time for me to send him the post hearing brief, I asked him to please not send it back to me with red marks where I might have placed too many commas.

He was an extraordinary soul and his light will be missed. My deepest condolences to his family and friends. May his memory always be a blessing.

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**Derlys Maria Gutiérrez** - May 14, 2025 at 09:49 PM

PK

“ My deepest condolences to all mourning this great loss! My childhood memories are filled with trips to Aunt Grace’s house which was filled with love, laughter, and teasing! Frankie was always so much fun! In high school Frankie gave me a crash course in summarizing my summer reading projects with some pleading from my mom Marie who adored him and his whole family. In my 20’s when I was very ill he would visit and help add a ray of sunshine and hope. I am so sorry to hear of his passing and send all my love. Special regards to Tina, Francesca, Anna , and Charlie Boy.

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Phyllis Ruglio Kormann - May 13, 2025 at 06:41 PM

JG

“ Our hearts and condolences go out to Tina and the family. We were fortunate to be friends with Frank since childhood, a friendship that endured our lifetime. When you have shared history with someone like Frankie, it is a colorful nostalgic past that touched our hearts.

*From an early age, Frank was witty and sharp becoming a leader. He was our high school football quarterback, calling the plays and gaining all our respect. A group of us stayed in contact with Frank over the years and even though it became less frequent, when we were together it was just like yesterdays, stories being told, laughter in our voices but mostly a genuine affection for one another. Frankie was our pride. Still sharp and quick with laughter and always giving a tenderness of friendship we all cherished.*

*We are grateful for all the memories. He will be dearly missed.*

*Forever in our thoughts and hearts,*

*Steve B., James & Janet, Rich & Judy, Don & Sue & Al*



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**Judith Giessuebel** - May 13, 2025 at 04:25 PM

ER

“ Frank was a colleague at NJEA, and I had the pleasure of helping him transition to a well-deserved retirement when I was in HR there. He was a true gentleman who will be missed by many.

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**Ed Richardson** - May 13, 2025 at 02:17 PM

BT

“ I didn't know Frank as long as most people, but he instantly made me feel like we knew each other for years. I will miss his stories and laugh at our many lunchtime discussions ranging from sports, politics, world events and of course the Yankees! It is an honor and privilege to call him my friend.

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**Bud Trifiletti** - May 13, 2025 at 12:21 PM

CJ

“ My thoughts and prayers go out to Tina and family 🙏🙏

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**cheryl james** - May 13, 2025 at 09:01 AM

EB

My deepest Condolences Tina and Family may he rest in peace knowing Tina for over 60 years and just finding out that Frank and Tina have been our neighbors in Emerson for a long time may God have Frank in his Glory 🙏🙏🙏

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**Edward Brioso** - May 13, 2025 at 10:55 AM

JB

“ I was so fortunate to have a long time friend and neighbor like Frank...always willing to lend a hand or share a story. I am so sorry, Tina, Frannie, and family..and I hope you will find comfort in the wonderful experiences that you shared..Be at peace, Frank,you will surely be missed!

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**Jill Barbarise** - May 13, 2025 at 08:30 AM

AS

“ Frank was truly one-of-a kind! He listened intently to a problem discussed at a meeting and then matter of factly came up with the perfect, intelligent and indisputable solution. He was a peacemaker, activist for justice and a gentleman. Those of us who were privileged to know him, couldn't help but love him. On behalf of the trustees, staff and volunteers at the American Labor Museum/Botto House National Landmark, where he actively served on the board, I extend our heartfelt gratitude to Frank for his dedication, generosity and intelligent ideas. He will forever live in our minds and hearts, in addition to the permanent marker which is placed in the museum's Old World Gardens for all to see and learn about this great human being, Brother Frank Cocuzza, Peacemaker.

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**Angelica Santomauro** - May 12, 2025 at 06:54 PM

R(

“ Growing up with my cousin Frank along with his siblings and other close cousins are memories I still talk about with my brother and other cousins. Our families were close throughout our younger years until we all went separate ways after college. I will always remember our family dinners and holidays along with all the good times we all had with my father “Cowboy”. We all shared a great childhood with memories of picnics, parties, family gatherings and lots of fun and laughter. I often look at our pictures of our childhood days and they always put a smile on my face. Rest in peace and you will be missed. Rosemarie & Buzzy

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**Rosemarie Estok (DeNorscio)** - May 12, 2025 at 11:46 AM

MN

“ Always in your heart. ❤️  
Condolences,  
Marge Bandino Nosenchuk

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**Marge Bandino Nosenchuk** - May 12, 2025 at 09:49 AM