

Joseph M. Chalovich, Sr.

How would I describe my friend and adopted stepfather Joe Chalovich? He was a Catholic, Husband, Father, Croatian, Soldier, Laborer, Pittsburgher and want-to-be golfer. He liked the Atlanta Braves, but only because they were on TV so much. He was someone who had lost most of his sight and hearing, and lived a few years more than anyone predicted with only 2/3 of a lung, but his heart was as big as anyone's.



He was an honest, caring, hardworking guy who could be bull-headed and opinionated at times, but sensitive enough to be loved by little children and respected by his friends. He and Madge are the honorary grandparents of our children and the friends who comforted and looked in on my mom when my dad passed away on September 1, 1997.

Questions you did not ask Joe: 1. What do you think about public funding for stadiums? 2. Where is your three-wood; 3. What would you do if you found the owner of the dog that is doing his business on your lawn? 4. How would you compare the posi-traction of a 1973 Bonneville to a 1973 VW Beetle's rear wheel drive?

I have many great memories of Joe that I will never forget. I remember driving to Joe and Pat's wedding in Blacksburg VA and making siren noises from our car and almost getting him to pull over.

I remember him learning the game of golf and knowing having the solace of knowing that no matter how bad he was, he'd always be better than my dad.

I remember the stories he would tell about World War II, and how only the Pittsburgh soldiers would be at the dock at Hawaii when the Iron City Beer was shipped in.

I remember the joy in his face when we'd leave our kids off for babysitting, and the sadness in his face when we returned to get them.

I remember how he loved to play 99 and other card games I can't name or explain.

I remember how proud he and Madge were of their Croatian heritage. My German Irish kids understand Cuckle T and Dobra, but don't have a clue about Wie Gehts. I still can't get over how many of Joe's family members married members of Madge's family. Talk about preserving tradition...and they weren't afraid to open their arms to my family to the point where we even got to go to Croatian Days at Kennywood.

I can even remember when Joe was on strike for weeks at a time and the pain he endured to earn a better wage for his family. And when Allis Chalmers closed, he never hesitated about becoming a welder, because it was better to earn a wage than be given a handout.

Today we celebrate the life of a man who was married to the same woman for more than 50 years (and was happy) who only last week in the emergency room told his wife that his illness bothered him most because he should be taking care of her and not the other way around.

If we can put aside our selfish reasons for missing him, we should be thanking God. What a beautiful death. On Wednesday morning, this very ill man afraid of losing his independence gave Madge a kiss as he left for his Chemotherapy treatment.

During that treatment, he conversed with the doctor and nurses on a variety of topics and had them all smiling, as was his nature. Between their regular visits to his treatment room, he suddenly and painlessly was called home.

Are we Christians or hypocrites? This is what it's all about. He ran the good race, fought the good fight and now it was time to receive his reward. Today, we're here to say farewell in the very church where Joe worshiped for nearly a half century. Many of you attended Mass here with him for two generations of Sundays. It doesn't get any better than this.

Today, we celebrate the life of an ordinary person who did extraordinary things by setting an example of how to live out his station in life. Joe didn't worry about what he didn't have because he appreciated and valued what he did have, especially his wife, children and extended family. Joe didn't worry about being politically correct, because he was more concerned about being morally right. He knew how to laugh, yet wasn't afraid to cry. That's what endeared him to me...he lived for his God, cherished his family and fought for his country.