

## Obituary: Joseph Cielensky

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Joseph Cielensky, 76, of Charleston passed away on December 14, 2010.

Born in Nemaocolin, Pa., on September 25, 1934 Joe was one of five children born to Frank and Anna Cielensky. A graduate of Carmichaels High School in Carmichaels, Pa., he led his team to two undefeated seasons. Joe was offered athletic scholarships by several colleges and chose to attend Morris Harvey College, now the University of Charleston, where he played football and met Shirley Goodman, who became his lifelong friend and wife. During his college football career, he led his team, the Golden Eagles, to the 1955 Cigar Bowl. He earned master's degrees from both Marshall and West Virginia University.

For the first sixteen years of his professional career, Joe taught at Charleston Catholic High School. With his enthusiasm and can-do attitude, Joe stepped in and accepted many roles outside the classroom, believing that young people deserved opportunities to participate in a wide array of activities. He coached basketball, football, tennis, baseball, and swimming. His teams won three Catholic League state football championships and five basketball championships, including four in a row. Joe was named coach of the year on several occasions. More than thirty of Joe's Charleston Catholic athletes, including two who were Kennedy Award winners, were recruited by and played sports in Division I schools. Many of his players maintained contact with him over the years, a tribute to the influence he had on their lives. As athletic director, Joe was at the forefront, leading Charleston Catholic from the West Virginia Catholic League to membership in the West Virginia Secondary Schools Activities Commission. Since leaving the school officially, Joe continued his interest in Charleston Catholic, serving until his death as an important mentor and confidant to school administrators and coaches.

Joe later taught and was head football and track coach at St. Albans High School and Clendenin Middle School until his retirement in 1999. For 36 years Joe officiated high school basketball and football, as well as college football. Joe was a valued member of the Southern Board of Basketball Officials, the Kanawha Valley Football Officials Association, and the Kanawha County Association of Retired School Employees. In 2009, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the West Virginia Athletic Directors Association in recognition of his years of outstanding work and dedication to the athletes and youth of West Virginia. He held an honorary membership in the Knights of Columbus.

Joe was ferocious in his love for, and pride in, Shirley and their family. Family ranked number one with Joe and the years were filled with memorable experiences with his wife, children, and grandchildren (especially his grandsons' golf careers and his granddaughters' soccer careers), brothers and sisters, and the extended family. During his years at Charleston Catholic, Joe packed up his family each June and settled in to a cabin at Camp Carlisle, the Union Carbide summer camp where Joe was camp director. For many years following those summers happily spent in the woods of Kanawha County, Joe and family headed south, pulling an Airstream trailer to Myrtle Beach where they spent the summer camping across the street from the beach. Eventually Joe and Shirley purchased a cottage near the ocean where he spent every available moment relishing the pleasures of seafood, shrimping, shopping with the "love of my life," and enjoying his role as the

"Unofficial Mayor of Murrells Inlet." Proud of his roots, Joe enjoyed high school reunions, Steelers games, and pierogies and nut rolls from his hometown.

Joe leaves an enduring legacy, demonstrating the positive impact that one person can have on so many others. Joe never missed an opportunity to convey his love for his family. Joe was as passionate about excellence in academics as he was about excellence in athletics. Joe was unselfish in his good wishes for others and quick to recognize their accomplishments.

Joe was preceded in death by his parents and his son, Joseph L. Cielensky Jr. He is survived by his wife, Shirley; daughters, Leigh Anne Cielensky and husband Mark Boggs, Vicki C. Holstein and husband Mark, and Kelly Cielensky, all living in the Charleston area; mother-in-law, Edna Goodman; sister-in-law, Judy Schilling; brothers, Frank Cielensky and wife Emma of Clearwater, Fla., and Charles Cielensky and wife Mary of Ravenna, Ohio; sisters, Rita C. Rock and husband Richard of Beltsville, Md., and Eleanor C. Gibbs of Vista, Calif.; grandchildren, Jason C. Holstein, Justen C. Holstein, Jordan C. Holstein, Britani C. Wilson, and Briena C. Wilson; step-grandchildren, Ian and Cayla Boggs; and step-great-grandchildren, Aidan Boggs and Weston Adams.

A service to honor the life of Joseph will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, December 18, 2010 at Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral in Charleston with Monsignor P. Edward Sadie officiating. Burial will be in Mount Olivet Cemetery in Charleston. Family and friends may visit from 6 to 8 p.m. on Friday, December 17, at Snodgrass Funeral Home in South Charleston. A prayer service will be conducted at 7:30 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Charleston Catholic High School, 1033 Virginia Street, Charleston, WV 25301.

Memories of Joseph may be shared by visiting [www.snodgrassfuneral.com](http://www.snodgrassfuneral.com) and selecting the obituary.

Snodgrass Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.