

**DR. JOHN A. YOCCA**  
June 24, 1928 - July 3, 2023



We are sad to announce the passing of our father, Dr. John Anthony Yocca on July 3, 2023, at the age of 95. Dad was at home, with his incredibly loving and long-term caregiving-son, Scott. A private military service will be held August 1, 2023, at the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies.

Our father, John Anthony Yocca was born in the bustling coal mining town of Windber, Pennsylvania. He grew up during the Depression, was one of ten children to Italian-immigrant parents, Nick and Sadie and was raised without government assistance. Much of dad's young, life experiences have helped to define our appreciation of hard work and resolve. Dad often told us about the toughness of those family members that came before us, to make all of our lives possible and served as a point of pride for us as kids to get through tough times.

Young John was an exceptional athlete and student. As a result of personal tenacity and incredible physical strength from years of farm work and laboring at his father's stone quarry, he received a full athletic scholarship to Michigan State as an offensive guard. His coach, Biggie Munn stated, "I picked out John Yocca as one of the greatest blocking guards I've ever seen." Because of his well-deserved respect, John was able to convince the team's coaches to take a look at his Windber high school teammate, Frank Kush, who would join the team and eventually become a legendary coach at Arizona State University.

Graduating from Michigan State, with the Ross award for most outstanding scholar-athlete, John then followed his brother Ray's example by joining the army. Ray landed in Normandy and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. John and his younger brother Nick were both deployed to Korea at the same time. John served as First Lieutenant with the 7th Division Infantry.

After three years of active duty, returning home, dad was recruited by the Steelers and the then NFL team, New York Yanks but he decided to go to Dental School at the University of Pittsburgh, where he met our mother Helen Bernard at a fraternity dance. Mom was educated at Alleghany General Hospital and worked as an x-ray technician in Oakland. They were soon married and upon graduation, they set up his first dental practice on Perrysville Avenue. Years later Dad returned to the University of Pittsburgh as an assistant professor in the Graduate Department of Orthodontics.

John decided in 1966 to pursue graduate school at the University of Columbia located in New York City, to earn a Doctorate of Dental Science (DDS) in Orthodontics. This brief biography would be remiss without mentioning one of our father's brightest recollections, the time that he literally bumped into his greatest childhood idol. One night while living as a student in New York City, John was waiting for a friend at Jilly's Bar, someone shouldered him, when he turned to see who it was, he was left speechless, which is rare. It was Frank Sinatra! Dad spent the next five decades pondering what he could have said.

The next twenty-plus years were spent working and helping our dear mother to raise a family. Baseball games, football games, coaching, wrestling matches and help with science projects are all fond memories. Dad played ball with us well into his late adulthood. He was a great athlete through and through.

In 1985, when our mother became paralyzed, our father, would carry her up and down the stairs to bed. He did this into his eighties and helped her with daily cares of life. Dad also was her physical therapist, helping to message and exercise her legs, nightly. He loved her in the best way he knew how.

With the birth of his grandson Brad, "Dad" was replaced with "Pap-pap", probably his best and most heart filling memory. Even towards the end of dad's time on earth, any mention of Brad or the sharing of stories of the things Brad had said or antics that he did as a little guy, brought about intent listening, a calmness to his mind and smile to his face.

A sad drawback to longevity is living long enough to see most of the ones you love, pass on. Dad was not the same after the loss his sister Josephine, who preceded him in death (at the age of 100) merely three months prior. John Anthony Yocca at the age of 95, was preceded in death by his father Nick, mother Sadie, sisters, Hilda, Olga, Mary, Josephine, Florence and Gloria, and his brothers, Eugene, Raymond, Nickolas Jr., and his amazing wife, Helen. John is survived by his children Jack, Scott and Wendy, daughter-in-law Stephanie and grandson, Brad.

Dad, you absolutely dominated in athletics and excelled scholastically, we admire your tremendous accomplishments. You have impacted our lives in so many ways. Thank you, for all your sacrifices. You remain in our hearts; we love and miss you every day. May you rest in eternal light.

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