

MICHAEL CARL PRIBANIC



Michael Carl Pribanic, age 68, of Elizabeth Township, died on Wednesday, November 8, 2023. He was born in McKeesport on May 5, 1955. This auspicious birth date presaged a rich and passionate, yet tragically foreshortened life.

In his nearly seven-decades, Michael's interests, activities, and passions were far-flung and diverse. He attended McKeesport Area High School where he was an ever popular and always superior learner actively involved in student government. He graduated in 1973 and went on to the University of Pittsburgh. It was there he met his future wife, Virginia (Ginny) Flavin. Their marriage day on September 11, 1982, was a delightful and, sometimes rowdy, beginning to their 41 years of marriage where they enjoyed so many common interests in travel, skiing, scuba diving, boating, golfing and surrounded themselves by so many lifelong friends and loving family.

Michael was admitted to Duquesne Law School, where he was honored with a coveted spot on the school's Law Review and graduated at the top of his class. He then joined the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office and spent 4 years there, honing his native skill as a lawyer and growing desire to protect each human's equal rights under the law. As a prosecutor for the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office, he was uniformly renowned and respected by members of the bench and bar as a skilled advocate for victims and passionate defender of their rights.

He later joined his brother, Victor Pribanic, in a fledgling law practice to form the seminal law firm of Pribanic & Pribanic. They were later joined by their brothers Jeffrey and, most recently, Ernest Pribanic, in the practice of law where they represent victims of medical and other negligence.

Michael's life as a lawyer was one that was driven by an unwavering passion to fight for justice and defend and protect the underdog. Often, he would champion a cause, pro bono, and solely for the benefit of others. Exemplary of this was a case he was particularly proud of that aimed to protect the rights of individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families to choose their care setting. His efforts ensured that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania could not force individuals from important institutions, like the Polk Center in Franklin County (where his brother-in-law, Dan, resided for many years) without consent. In the judicial opinion that solidified the rights of these institutional residents, the presiding judge penned a rare footnote describing Michael's qualities as the lawyer before his bench:

"Mr. Pribanic, considering his competent presentation of this case, and the unwavering commitment to the cause of the severely mentally retarded, makes one again proud to be part of the legal profession."

Footnote to the opinion of: The Honorable Judge H. William White, IN RE: Ruth Easley, In the Court of Common Pleas of Venango County, Pennsylvania, April 12, 2000.

Michael's efforts allowed the residents of Polk to reside in their lifelong home for years afterwards. In short, if a legal issue struck a chord in Michael's heart, he would approach helping the helpless with the same zeal and passion that he devoted to the practice of law in a less rarified atmosphere.

In addition to law suits, Michael reserved a special place for another type of suit – for the past 30 years, Michael and Ginny spent the months before Christmas each year collecting donated gifts for the residents of Polk to be wrapped for Christmas time, when Michael would don his Santa Claus suit, and with the help of his elves, bring gifts and joy to the residents of Polk, many of whom would have spent the holiday alone were it not for this annual demonstration of love, always making sure that each, often lonely soul, received an individually wrapped, appropriate gift.

He retired from the practice of law at Pribanic & Pribanic in 2019, solely for health reasons, not because of any waning love for the law or his work with his lawyer brothers.

Michael was naturally gifted when it came to children and excelled at catering to a child's natural sense of wonder and joy. As the second oldest of 11 children, he did this first for his many younger siblings and then his own family. After losing their first child, Eli, to sudden infant death syndrome in 1996 year, Michael and Virginia were blessed with their wonderful son Ian in 2000. Ian was perhaps Michael's greatest joy in life. While encouraging Ian to become his own man, and proudly sharing with anyone who would listen that Ian was doing just that, Michael keenly shared his life's passions with his son. He recently had a work of art commissioned that captured an early example of their relationship—Ian holding his first trout together with Michael radiantly smiling at the event. Unsurprisingly, Michael helped to raise Ian into a good and kind young man.

Michael and Virginia were ardent fans of the late Harry Chapin and, fittingly, Michael's favorite song was "A Better Place to Be." As lawyers are wont to, he was a lover of good storytellers, including Paul Harvey and Garrison Keillor in spite of their, respectively, politics and personal lives. Of his ten siblings, he was far and away the most accomplished fly fisherman and was famously known to always catch more trout during the families annual opening day junket to Potter County, Pennsylvania than anyone and, sometimes, more than all of the rest combined.

He and Virginia were lovers of English Setter dogs all their lives, beginning with Casey (an at first unwanted gift from his brother, Victor), which led to a long line of English Setters, including, most recently, Chelsea, who may miss him most of all. Until no longer able, Michael was an avid upland bird hunter and could be found in the Pennsylvania or Southern Ohio grouse woods on any weekend until his physical condition prevented it. Oceans were another of his physical. He and Ginny traveled the globe on scuba diving adventures; the venues included the Seychelles, Grand Cayman and St. Lucia. The family and friends gathered annually at their beloved Martha's Vineyard home where he celebrated his lifelong love affair with the sea.

He will be sorely missed by his wife, Virginia; his son, Ian; and his extended family, including many, many nieces and nephews, and loving circle of great friends. He is also survived by his mother, Marlene; and his siblings, in descending order, Victor (Janet), David (Peggy), Jeffrey (Missy), Chris, Adam (Jen), Sean (Christine), Meredith, Daniel (Megan) and Ernest (Leslie). Preceded in death by his brother, Jonathan James Pribanic; and his father, John Edward Pribanic.

Home is the sailor, home from the sea,

And the hunter home from the hill.

Robert Louis Stevenson – Requiem

Family and friends will gather on Monday, November 13, 2023 from 2:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. at **STRIFFLERS OF WHITE OAK CREMATIONS AND MORTUARY SERVICES, INC.**, 1100 Lincoln Way, White Oak, PA 15131 (Sue Striffler Galaski, supervisor, 412-678-6177). A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Tuesday, November 14, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. at Mary, Mother of God Parish, St. Angela Merici Church, 1640 Fawcett Avenue, White Oak, PA 15131. Everyone is asked to meet directly at the church.

Send condolences post-gazette.com/gb