

JOSEPH L. SCARPACI, JR.



Age 68, of Blacksburg, Virginia, left this earth on December 30, 2023 due to a sudden onset of illness. Scarpaci, a proud Pittsburgh native, was born on January 13, 1955, and grew up in a loving and vibrant Mount Lebanon family including three siblings and many cousins. A true child of the 1960s, he carried an inimitable free-spiritedness and curiosity forward throughout his life, opening

worlds to people they never knew existed.

Inspired by two generations of his father's wholesale company, National Fruit and Produce, and the tales behind each delivery, Scarpaci pursued a path in academia that focused on uncovering the uniqueness of place; receiving his bachelor's (Rutgers University), master's (Pennsylvania State University) and Ph.D. (University of Florida) degrees in geography. He was a repeat recipient of the Fulbright Award.

He married his college sweetheart and life partner of 47 years, Gilda Machin-Scarpaci, and together, they raised two children, Cristina and Michael. Family and fatherhood were Scarpaci's greatest joys, and he delighted in his recent role as 'papa' to his first grandchild, Josephine "Josie" Collier.

Scarpaci, professor emeritus at Virginia Tech (1989-2008), taught and researched at the institution where he established cultural exchange programs to Chile and Cuba, a pursuit he continued with his organization the Center for the Study of Cuban Culture and Economy. He was preparing to take a group on his nearly 100th trip to Cuba at the time of his passing.

Throughout his career, he authored numerous scholarly publications; served as a trusted dissertation advisor to many; and, received recognitions and honorary positions for his contributions to the field from the Association of American Geographers, the Conference of Latinamericanist Geographers and the Library of Congress, among others.

Endlessly inquisitive, he traveled to, and explored, cultures around the world, living in Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Chile, Argentina and Denmark, and summiting mountains from the Himalayas to the Alleghenies. He curated a milieu of passions and hobbies including cycling, yoga, tennis, bird watching, ESL and Spanish instruction, conservation and remained active in the Pittsburgh community, organizing his Mt. Lebanon High School class of 1972 reunions and fundraising for the Magee Women's Research Institute & Foundation in his mother's memory.

Scarpaci is survived by his wife, Gilda Machin-Scarpaci; children Cristina Scarpaci (Christopher Collier), Michael Scarpaci (Katie Scarpaci); granddaughter, Josephine Collier; and siblings, Darlene Violetta (Bradley Violetta), Josette Scarpaci and Sam Scarpaci. He is preceded in death by his adoring parents Joseph L. Scarpaci, Sr. and Josephine Cicero Scarpaci; grandparents Thomas Scarpaci, Josephine Scarpaci, Anna Spalla, Ann Cicero and Sam Cicero; and aunts, uncles and cousins who welcome him to the next life with a Cuban cigar, cold martini and Frank Sinatra on the record player.

Follow [everloved.com/life-of/joseph-scarpaci/](https://www.loveof.com/life-of/joseph-scarpaci/) for information on a celebration of life and memorial contributions to the Josie Scarpaci Breast Health Access Fund, in lieu of flowers.

Send condolences [post-gazette.com/gb](https://www.post-gazette.com/gb)