

WALTER NICHOLAS BIELICH

April 4, 1930 – March 6, 2024



Walter Nicholas Bielich, 94, of Pittsburgh, PA, passed away peacefully in his sleep at his Squirrel Hill home on Wednesday, March 6, 2024.

Walt was preceded in death by his fabulous wife of 62 years, Hope Marion (Mervosh) Bielich, who passed away in 2015; parents, Sam Bielich and Martha (Zarnic) Bielich; and brother, Sam Bielich (the late Rowena Ayers). He will be forever missed by his sons, John

Bielich (Mary Pat Lackner) and Steven Bielich; daughters, Norma Bielich and Mary Bielich (Matt Tuite); granddaughters, Meghan Bielich and Bridget Bielich; grandsons, Steven Bielich (Jacqueline Coles); young great-grandchildren, Vivian Bielich, Harrison Bielich, and Quentin Bielich; and sister, Marlene (Bielich) Alexoff (the late Carl Alexoff) of Haddonfield, NJ. Walt was born and raised on Pittsburgh's South Side Slopes during the Great Depression. As a young man, he served as an altar boy at St. George's Serbian Orthodox Church, ushered at a local movie theater, played football and basketball at South High School, and graduated with the Class of 1948. After high school, Walt attended the University of Pittsburgh, where he played football during the storied Rocks era, pledged Sigma Chi Fraternity, and earned two degrees in Economics (BA 1955, ML 1957). In 1951, before earning his bachelor's degree, Walt put academics on hold and volunteered for service in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Korean War. He served as a Drill Instructor at Parris Island, SC, where he trained the inaugural class of the Platoon Leaders Course (PLC), a boot camp for candidates who were still in college and aspired to earn their commissions as 2nd Lieutenants. Walt achieved the rank of Sergeant and spent his entire three years of service (1951 to 1954) playing football for the USMC teams at Parris Island and Camp Lejeune, NC. Walt, a third-generation steelworker, was the elder son of a United Steelworkers Union (USW) founder and pioneer. In 1955, Walt began his long career with U.S. Steel as a Melter Foreman at Open Hearth #5, U.S. Steel Homestead Works. In 1978, after 23 years of various frontline and second-level positions, he became Assistant to the General Superintendent of the Homestead plant. Three years later, in 1981, Walt was transferred to U.S. Steel Gary Works in Gary, Indiana, where he became Plant Manager, Gary East. At the time, Gary East was the steel-producing side of the largest steelmaking facility in the world. After seven years working in Gary and living in Valparaiso, Indiana, Walt retired from US Steel and returned to Pittsburgh. For ten more years, he worked as a consultant to US Steel, during which time he traveled throughout Eastern Europe to assess the viability of steel-producing facilities that US Steel was interested in acquiring. From the early 1960s through the 1970s, Walt was active in local politics and government. He was elected Councilman for Bethel Park Ward 4 several times, served on the Bethel Park Democratic Committee, and volunteered on various local and county campaigns. Walt donated any money he made from public service to local charities. Being one of the all-time great Pitt fans, Walt enjoyed a second career working in Pitt's Department of Athletics. In 1987, he was hired as Assistant Director of Development for Athletics, and several years later became Executive Director of the Pitt Varsity Letter Club. After 20+ years of service to Pitt, he officially retired. Walt loved the beauty and energy of the Oakland campus, the people with whom he worked, and the students and athletes with whom he interacted. Walt and Hope especially loved Pitt women's volleyball, and they endowed a scholarship in Hope's name, to be awarded to one senior player each year. There will never be another Walt Bielich. Friends will be received on Friday, March 15, 2024, from 5 to 8 pm at **JOHN F. SLATER FUNERAL HOME**, 412-881-4100, 4201 Brownsville Road, Pittsburgh, PA, 15227 (South Hills/Whitehall). A Serbian Orthodox Service will be held the following day, Saturday, March 16, from 11 am to noon at Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Cathedral, 450 Maxwell Drive, Pittsburgh, PA, 15236 (South Hills/Whitehall). There will also be a viewing from 10 - 11 am at the church prior to the start of the service. Private Burial (family only) is on Monday, March 18, at 10 am at the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies, 1158 Morgan Road, Bridgeville, PA, 15017, where Walt and Hope will rest together forever. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Hope Mervosh Bielich women's volleyball scholarship, payable to the University of Pittsburgh Department of Athletics, PO Box 7436, Pittsburgh, PA, 15213. Please send condolences to www.johnfslater.com.

Send condolences post-gazette.com/gb