



Joseph Kevin Cooney

August 23, 1950 - August 17, 2022

Joseph Kevin Cooney, 71, a husband, father, brother, friend, and attorney, passed away peacefully on August 17 at his home in Estero, Florida, following a six-year fight with Multiple Myeloma. His wife and two children were by his side.

Joe, known to family and friends as “Buddy,” was born in Jersey City on August 23, 1950. He was the first of six sons born to Joseph Martin and Joan Ann Cooney (nee Healy). Joe grew up in Hasbrouck Heights, living out his childhood at the family’s homes on Springfield Avenue and Henry Street, the latter of which was purchased by the Cooneys in 1963 and in which his father lived until his death earlier this year. Joe’s parents afforded him and his brothers a childhood filled with happiness and opportunity. The Cooney family belonged to Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church, where Joe and his brothers served as altar boys and attended grammar school. Growing up, Joe reveled in playing stickball and stoopball with neighborhood friends and competing in spirited pickup basketball games on the backyard basketball court built by the Doherty family—the Cooneys’ closest family friends. Joe relished summer camp at Camp Notre Dame on Lake Spofford in New Hampshire and extended summer vacations to the Jersey Shore, where he would later settle.

Following in his father’s footsteps, Joe attended high school at Saint Peter’s

Prep in Jersey City, which was pivotal to his formation. He thrived there as a student and athlete, lettering in baseball, basketball, and soccer, developing lifelong friendships, and adopting Pride and Glory—the school’s motto—as values of his own. He maintained an enduring connection to the institution, proudly serving alongside his father on the Board of Trustees. After graduating from The Prep in 1968, Joe earned his Bachelor of Arts ('72) and Juris Doctorate ('75) from the University of Notre Dame. Joe’s admission to Notre Dame was a momentous accomplishment not only for him, but also for his parents, who were devout Roman Catholics and “Subway Alumni” of the elite Catholic University—the Cooney family cheered Irish football on Saturdays as hard as they prayed at Corpus Christi on Sundays. Joe was proud to send his children, J.P. ('99) and Meghan ('01), to Notre Dame and recounted among his fondest memories the fact that he was able to share their graduation days with his own parents.

After earning his law degree and clerking for a New Jersey Superior Court judge, Joe settled in Monmouth County, where he practiced medical malpractice defense law for more than 40 years. In 1981, he partnered with Doug Widman to co-found the law firm of Widman & Cooney. Widman & Cooney thrived for 37 years, employing and developing dozens of attorneys and legal staff. Joe was a force in the New Jersey legal community, trying hundreds of cases to verdict and promoting professionalism and mentorship through his participation in the New Jersey and Monmouth Bar Associations, Haydn Proctor Inn of Court, and the Civil Certification Committee of the Board on Attorney Certification. Joe was widely respected as an impeccable advocate, honest broker, dedicated mentor, and hard worker.

Joe also actively contributed to and participated in the Jersey Shore community. Around 1990, he initiated and sponsored a summer service project for Notre Dame undergraduates at the Jersey Shore Medical Center, which afforded aspiring doctors and nurses the opportunity to participate in a

hands-on medical internship. Many of the service project's participants have gone on to successful medical careers.

Joe retired in 2018 and moved to Estero, Florida, where he lived in Shadow Wood with his devoted wife, Michele. Joe and Michele met in 2008 at the Shipwreck Grill in Brielle. They fell in love at first sight and spent virtually every moment of the next 15 years together. They married in 2017 and shared a companionship filled with love, joy, and unconditional support. They built a wonderful life together, traveling frequently and cementing memories for themselves and their loved ones by devoting time to friends, relatives, and grandchildren. Joe loved Michele with all his heart.

In 2016, Joe was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma. For the next six-and-a-half years he battled bravely, enduring grueling outpatient and inpatient chemotherapies and other treatments. He spent much of that time in significant discomfort and even severe pain, which he barely betrayed and about which he never complained. Joe's relentless courage and optimism were matched only by Michele's, who undertook every moment of the fight at his side. Joe was grateful for and humbled by her love, devotion, and support.

Joe was an avid sports fan and athlete and was intensely competitive. He loved the Fighting Irish and New York Yankees. The walls of his office and home were adorned with Notre Dame and Yankee memorabilia, which featured prominently in the background of Joe's Zoom calls with family and friends during the pandemic. In addition to his athletic accomplishments at The Prep, Joe played baseball and Freshman basketball at Notre Dame. He found much joy in, and always spoke fondly of, his membership on The Ducks, an intramural team at Notre Dame that competed in virtually every sport. Joe's teammates on The Ducks dubbed him "Big Cat" for his ferocious competitiveness. The Ducks captured Notre Dame's 1974 Bookstore

Basketball Tournament, which is believed to be the largest outdoor five-on-five tournament in the world, in which Joe was named the MVP. As an adult, Joe spent his free time playing softball with his much-loved Silber Knights and prized summer weekends playing tennis with friends at the Seabright Lawn and Tennis Club. In retirement, Joe played tennis as often as possible and laid awake at night crafting the lineup for the Brooks Cup, an annual tennis competition for which Joe captained his Shadow Wood community team. He also volunteered as a coach for Challenger Baseball, a league for kids with intellectual and physical challenges. Ironically, Joe coached the Red Sox.

Nothing brought more joy to Joe than his family. He adored his children, J.P. and Meghan; doted over his five grandchildren and many nieces and nephews; and placed immense value on his relationship with his brothers. Joe revered his father, with whom he enjoyed playing Scrabble in the living room of the Cooney family's Henry Street home while reminiscing about Cooney family history as they both grew older. Among Joe's favorite things in life was family Thanksgiving gatherings at Henry Street and at other Cooney family homes, which over time spread to other New Jersey towns, Virginia, and North Carolina—Joe looked forward to those gatherings all year long. Most of all, Joe loved spending time with his grandchildren, watching them play baseball, soccer, and basketball, attending their swim meets, playing H-O-R-S-E, treating them to Hibachi every Thanksgiving Eve, and sharing belly-aching laughter.

Joe lived a rich and meaningful life marked by his devotion to family, dedication to friends, and abiding faith. He is survived by his beloved wife and companion, Michele; two children, J.P. and Meghan, along with their spouses Maureen Cooney and Michael Rinehart; five grandchildren, Eleanor, Ryan, Mary, Connor, and Annie; four brothers, Brian (Christy), Kevin (Theresa), Terry, and Sean (Nan); sisters-in-law Debbie (Len) and Jacquelyn; an aunt and many nephews, nieces, and godchildren; and countless friends he

considered as family. Joe is pre-deceased by his father, Joseph; mother, Joan; brother, Dennis; and nephew, Danny.

A viewing will be held on Sunday, August 21 from 2:00 to 5:00pm at Shikany's Bonita Funeral Home in Bonita Springs. A funeral Mass will be held on Monday, August 22 at 12:00pm at Our Lady of Light Catholic Community in Fort Myers.

In lieu of flowers, the Cooney family would appreciate donations to Saint Peter's Prep in Jersey City or the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation.

To sign Joe's guest register or to leave online condolences, please visit www.ShikanyFuneralHome.com.

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG **21**. 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (ET)

Shikany's Bonita Funeral Home
28300 Tamiami Trail So.
Bonita Springs, FL 34134
(239) 992-4982
bonitafhbill@comcast.net

Mass of Christian Burial

AUG **22**. 12:00 PM (ET)

Our Lady of Light Catholic Community
19680 Cypress View Dr.
Ft. Myers, FL 33967

Tribute Wall



“ I am sad to hear of the passing of Joe and am sending my sincere condolences to Michele and to his children, JP and Megan. I worked with Joe from 2001 through 2011 and am honored to say so. Joe was an absolute saint and mentor, and I owe my professional career to him for taking a chance on me. It is through my tears that I remember Joe and I know that he is resting in peace. My love and respect for you always.

Debra Murphy - March 07, 2025 at 03:19 PM



“ *Joseph Kevin Cooney*

October 09, 2023 at 03:40 AM

CB

“ Just learning this evening of the passing Joe and to say that I am devastated and heartbroken would be an understatement. My professional relationship with Joe began with my writing an Appellate Division brief for him which resulted in my being hired by his firm. Even after I left the firm several years later, I continued to write Appellate Division briefs for him including the last one after he had retired to Florida while battling multiple myeloma. Joe was one of the most well respected and accomplished trial attorneys in New Jersey. While I credit Donald Grasso with teaching me medical malpractice defense and giving me a solid foundation and love for the practice area, Joe allowed me to flourish and grow and helped me to refine my skills. More importantly, he was the true definition of a gentleman who treated everyone with kindness and respect. I always remembered when I was at an appearance that I was representing his name and reputation. I last spoke with him in August of 2021 and he was enjoying his relaxed lifestyle in Florida with Michelle. I had thought of him since then I so wish I had reached out when I did.

Colleen Brandt - January 04, 2023 at 09:18 PM

RO

“ So sorry to hear of Joe's passing. I was fortunate to know Joe through my wife who was friends with Michele. Condolences to Michele and Joe's family. May he now RIP.

Robert - August 25, 2022 at 03:26 PM

RN

“ I had the good fortune to meet Joe at Notre Dame our freshmen year. We both made the freshmen basketball team. I think we were both surprised we made it and became good friends that year. From that experience we remained friends throughout our 4 years at ND. While Joe was a great athlete and competitor, he was a better guy. We hung out, laughed a lot and played a lot of intramural basketball and enjoyed pick up games at the ‘Rock’ at ND. While we lost touch after college for the most part, we got re-connected through a mutual friend at Shadow Wood in Florida. We communicated occasionally and in particular after our 50th reunion this past June at ND, which Joe was unable to attend. Fortunately, we had 6 members of our freshmen team attend and we spent a lot of time telling old basketball stories and talking about Joe in all of them. I relayed all of this to him when I returned via text and he was very glad to hear my recount. We agreed to get together this October in Florida when I planned to return. I will miss having that opportunity and, more importantly, I will remember Joe as a good friend, teammate, classmate and all around ‘good guy’. My condolences to Michele, his extended family and friends. Rest In Peace, Joe. Rick Neeson

riick neeson - August 23, 2022 at 10:56 AM

TH

“ So sorry to hear of Joe's passing. I was fortunate to know and work with Joe quite a bit and loved being in his company. We shared a love of Irish football and Yankee baseball. A kind and interesting man with great love for his family. My family sends condolences to Joe's family. May he now RIP.

Tom Harris - August 22, 2022 at 12:20 PM

SF

“ *Shari Faganel purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Joseph Kevin Cooney.*



Shari Faganel - August 21, 2022 at 10:52 PM

JM

“ *I was really saddened to learn of Joe's passing.*

As a classmate of his at Prep, I remember an enthusiastic and charismatic guy that was always the center of the "action".

Fifty years quickly passed and I had the opportunity to share a table and a ride to the hotel with Joe and Michele at our 50th reunion. The years had not diminished that sparkle and it appeared as though nothing had changed over those lost decades... allowing us to pickup where we had left off so many years before. Along with a subsequent dinner in Tampa, these were times I still remember fondly to this day.

RIP Joe and keep smiling down on us all.

My prayers and thoughts go out to Michele and the Cooney family.

Jim McCoy SPP '68

Jim McCoy - August 21, 2022 at 06:14 PM

JR

“ *Prep chartered a bus at our 50th Reunion to take us to the Don Bosco football game in Ramsey. I was really looking forward to the game with our upstate rival. However, when I boarded the bus, I was surprised that there was only one other '68 alum on it - Joe Cooney, accompanied by his wife, Michele.*

I had a great time catching up with Joe on the long trip up there (I believe we got caught in rush hour traffic.) We also watched the game together which was fairly exciting as Prep came back to win in the fourth quarter.

Michele, I feel very fortunate to have had a chance to spend some time with you and Joe before his passing. He was a great guy and he lived a wonderful life. Please accept my heartfelt condolences.

John Ryan '68

John Ryan - August 21, 2022 at 02:06 PM

PS

“ *Meghan and J.P., we were sorry to hear about your dad's passing this past week. Our special thoughts and prayers are with you and your families during this sad time. Wishing God's grace, peace and comfort to you and to all who knew and loved Joe. He will be in our hearts forever. May he rest in Divine Peace. PJ Schelpf and family*

Phyllis Schelpf - August 21, 2022 at 01:47 PM

BB

“ Joe became a great friend when we met at the club with Michele by his side. We were seated together one night for dinner and Joe, Michele, Sue and I became fast friends. It was Joe that introduced me to tennis and the great thing about Joe is he would play at any level to make the game fun, as I progressed he would up his game. We are going to miss nights out, falling asleep at play's the girls would take us to, dinners, card games and guy talk. I know you're in a better place but I'm going to miss you Buddy. Ben

Ben Bippen - August 20, 2022 at 04:46 PM

RW

“ In September 1968, Joe Cooney and I were crammed into what until then had been a single room in St. Edward’s Hall to begin our freshman year at Notre Dame.

As roommates we were something of an odd-couple in terms of interests and backgrounds, but grew to become close lifelong friends. That, despite living a continent away following law school.

In my memory there are two aspects of Bud that remain most prominent.

“Love thee Notre Dame” comes at the end of the alma mater and is a feeling almost all alumni profess. For Joe, though, his love for the place always seemed deeper. More a quiet, lasting, certain devotion.

And he was graced with a kind heart that invited everyone in. I was blessed to be one of those.

My prayers continue for the spiritual journey of my old roomie, and for the loss Michele, his family and all who loved him now feel.

Bob Weaver

Robert Weaver - August 20, 2022 at 02:58 PM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Joseph Kevin Cooney.



August 20, 2022 at 12:26 PM



“ *Magnificent Life Spray was purchased for the family of Joseph Kevin Cooney.*



August 20, 2022 at 10:52 AM



“ *Pink Potpourri Bouquet was purchased for the family of Joseph Kevin Cooney.*



August 19, 2022 at 10:25 PM



“ *Please accept my prayers and condolences for the family of my high school buddy Joe. We were classmates in the Greek Honors program for three years and enjoyed getting together at Prep reunions. Joe was certainly a great competitor in gym class and intramural sports, but he was always an honorable competitor and a great guy. He will be missed.- Jack Horan SPP 1968.*

Jack Horan - August 19, 2022 at 07:06 PM

HK

“ Joe and I first met when I was a first year law student and Joe was a young associate. I was his summer law clerk. We spent the summer of '77 traveling around the state of NJ in his "company car" - which was a '72 VW beetle convertible with no A/C. That summer the firm gave Joe Yankees World Series tickets to entertain clients - and he invited me instead. I still remember a Reggie Jackson line drive home run coming right at us in the first row of right field. I thought one of us might catch it until Joe yelled "duck". He knew the ball was probably traveling at light speed and not a good idea to get in the way of. Having probably saved my life, or maybe it was the great summer we had, we became lifelong friends. He remained my mentor for the next two years (summer and winter); and for years after that. We tried many cases as codefendants, and he was always a consummate gentleman and outstanding trial lawyer. We toasted the arrival of Meghan, and a few years later my own daughter. And we toasted many other life events and trial wins over the 40 years that I was privileged to have been a colleague. Fittingly, we tried Joe's last case as codefendants, each representing two nurses - and we won. He kept in touch through his health ordeal, and called me just a few weeks ago 'just to say hi' - and he never gave me an inkling that he was calling to say bye. I hung up the phone and told my wife (also a friend of Joe's) how upbeat the call had been - promising to go see him this fall. I think one of us knew that would not happen - but he kept that to himself. To the end dignified, filled with grace and class - and to the end, a friend. I miss you Bud.

Herb Kruttschnitt - August 19, 2022 at 04:05 PM



“ *Treasured Lilies Spray was purchased for the family of Joseph Kevin Cooney.*



August 19, 2022 at 03:32 PM



“ *Mike & I feel very privileged to call Joe our good friend. In the 56 years I knew Joe, he remained thoughtful & very kind. He fought this battle without any complaining. Michele was by his side to help him every step of the way. He will be sorely missed by Mike & I.*

Donna & Mike Paccione - August 19, 2022 at 02:44 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Joseph Kevin Cooney.*



August 19, 2022 at 02:03 PM



“ *Basket of Memories was purchased for the family of Joseph Kevin Cooney.*



August 19, 2022 at 09:57 AM



“ *Beautiful Dreams was purchased for the family of Joseph Kevin Cooney.*



August 19, 2022 at 09:02 AM



“ *It is with great sadness that I mourn the loss of my friend Joe. My sincerest condolences to Michele and his family. My enduring image of Joe was when we played together on the Silber Knights. He was a great shortstop who always got in front of the ball which resulted, because of the poor field condition, with balls bouncing off his chest and other parts of his body. At that time, I was handling his NJ Bar association disability plan. Joe didn't know that and I sent him a letter, as a joke, canceling his coverage due to the inherent risk of his playing shortstop. When I got to the field later in the week, he was showing the letter to Judge Ira at which time I revealed that I sent it. What a laugh we had. I also remember how Joe would come out into the outfield and congratulate me on some deep fly catch I had made on my way to the bench. Joe was affable, kind, and well liked by all. In the dictionary under the definition of Gentleman, they should have had a picture of Joe. And, Joe loved Michele.*

Stephen Leitzell - August 19, 2022 at 06:37 AM



“ *Condolences to the Cooney Family. Joe was a great classmate, teammate and friend. Paul '68 and Pat Tyrrell.*

Paul Tyrrell - August 18, 2022 at 10:14 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Joseph Kevin Cooney.*



August 18, 2022 at 09:29 PM



“ *Mitchell Gardiner lit a candle in memory of Joseph Kevin Cooney*



mitchell gardiner - August 18, 2022 at 08:55 PM



“ *My sincere and heartfelt condolences to Michele and all of Joe's loved ones. I know you have lost a wonderful husband, dad, uncle. I will truly miss this dear friend and mentor. Joe taught me more about malpractice law than anyone I have worked with in over 30 years. He left very large footprints in the legal world. May his memories be a blessing to all who he touched.*
Mitchell Gardiner

Mitchell Gardiner - August 18, 2022 at 08:47 PM



“ *I had the privilege of being Joe's secretary for 21 years from 1994 until my retirement in 2015. He was a pleasure to work with and we had many laughs at work, as well. I am sincerely sad and send my heartfelt condolences to his family members, who I came to know and love as well. All of you are in my prayers. Bonnie*

Bonnie Leandri - August 18, 2022 at 05:34 PM

RP

“ *Very sad to hear of Joe’s passing. Was with him last at Steve tomaszewski’s induction to prep hof. Was a great teammate with me on prep baseball and soccer teams. Will be greatly missed by all of his classmates. Ron Prezioso prep ‘68*

Ronald Prezioso - August 18, 2022 at 03:33 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Joseph Kevin Cooney.*



August 18, 2022 at 02:57 PM

KH

“ *Gonna miss you more than words can say.
Kenny Herr.*

Ken Herr - August 18, 2022 at 02:30 PM

CE

“ *We feel so privileged to have been called friends by Joe. Roger and Joe were legal colleagues in New Jersey specializing in medical malpractice defense. He has often spoken of Joe’s friendly, engaging personality and how highly esteemed Joe was considered in the legal community. We have lost a sweet, kind friend with a brilliant mind.*

❤️ *Colleen and Roger*

Colleen Ellis - August 18, 2022 at 02:06 PM

JB

“ Joe's battle with myeloma was both courageous and difficult but not once did I hear him complain about what he was going thru. Michelle was also magnificent in providing the kind of support that he so desperately needed dealing with this illness. We shall greatly miss him as a good friend and miss his enthusiasm on and around the tennis court.

Jim Bernene - August 18, 2022 at 01:40 PM

JC

“ Michele: Please accept my condolences for the passing of Joe. Although we knew each other from Prep, it was the coincidences in later life that brought us together. I wish you peace and comfort in the years ahead.
With Love, Jack Cavari

Jack Cavari - August 18, 2022 at 01:14 PM

YF

“ Yorktown '95 Family purchased the Treasured Lilies Spray for the family of Joseph Kevin Cooney.



Yorktown '95 Family - August 18, 2022 at 01:04 PM

JB

“ Very sorry for your loss. I rode with Joe on the bus to Jersey City every school day from Wood-Ridge.

Jay Brower - August 18, 2022 at 11:55 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Joseph Kevin Cooney.*



August 18, 2022 at 10:38 AM



“ *Arlington Storm Black purchased the Serenity Wreath for the family of Joseph Kevin Cooney.*



Arlington Storm Black - August 18, 2022 at 08:17 AM



“ *Many prayers for Buddy and the Cooney family. May your happy memories bring you comfort and peace. Much love.*
-Kevin Wilgus & Family

Kevin Wilgus - August 17, 2022 at 09:28 PM



“ *Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of Joseph Kevin Cooney.*



August 17, 2022 at 07:36 PM