



Ralph Anthony Cafaro Jr.

December 21, 1930 - February 14, 2026

Ralph Anthony Cafaro, Jr., 95, passed away peacefully at Pathways Inpatient Hospice Care Center in Fort Collins, Colorado on Saturday, February 14, 2026. His wife Claire, sons Paul and Phil, and daughter-in-law Kris were with him during his final days.

Ralph was born on December 21, 1930 in historic Seneca Falls, New York to Ralph and Nancy Cafaro. He grew up with his parents, older sister Joan (Cafaro Mastropaul), younger sister Joy (Cafaro Murphy) and many nearby relatives. As a boy, he helped his father in his shoe repair store, spending his earnings on comic books and candy. In high school, he played offensive line on the Mynderse Academy football team that went undefeated, untied and unscored upon.

Ralph attended Hobart College in Geneva, New York, where he received a Bachelor's degree in French and was honored with membership in Phi Beta Kappa. He later earned an MBA from Loyola University of Chicago. After college, he enlisted in the Army, studying Russian (one of five languages he spoke) at the Army Language School in Monterey, California and spending two subsequent years on Saint Lawrence Island, in the Bering Strait, listening in on Russian radio transmissions.

After his discharge from the service in 1955, Ralph worked for several years

as a banker in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with Citibank of New York. Returning to the States, he joined the pharmaceutical industry, first as a product manager with Merck, Sharp & Dohme and Abbott Laboratories, then as a marketing director with Morton-Norwich Products and G.D. Searle & Company, and finally as a consultant to the Menarini Group and Cole and Associates. He retired after a forty-year career.

Ralph met Claire Condes in New York City on a blind date, and they knew they were made for each other. She was the great love of his life. They married on June 3, 1961 and had two sons, Phil and Paul. For sixty-four years, Ralph could always be counted on as a loving and reliable husband, father, grandfather and friend.

Ralph was a talented amateur musician, who founded and conducted the Twentieth Century Concert Band in Seneca Falls, NY as a teenager. Later he played E-flat alto horn in concert bands in Wilmette, Illinois, Malta, New York and Loveland, Colorado. He loved to sing, especially with his sons and with the Okay Chorale of Fort Collins, right up until his final days.

In retirement, Ralph built an impressive sheet music collection of over twenty thousand pieces representing 16,500 separate titles, from the 1830s into the twenty-first century. The Ralph A. Cafaro, Jr. Sheet Music Collection is housed in the Johns Hopkins University's Sheridan Library in Baltimore, Maryland.

Ralph was preceded in death by his parents and sisters. He is survived by his wife and sons, his daughters-in-law Kris Bronars Cafaro of Fort Collins, Colorado and Julia Lofstrand of San Francisco, California; his grandsons Henry Cafaro of Chicago, Illinois, Tom Cafaro of Santa Barbara, California, and Benjamin Cafaro of San Francisco, California; and several nieces and nephews.

The family is grateful for the excellent care Ralph received in his final days from the staff at Poudre Valley Hospital and Pathways Inpatient Hospice Care Center of Fort Collins, Colorado. A memorial service will be held at a later date and place to be determined.

Tribute Wall

LD

“ My mother thought that Cousin Ralph walked on water. Fortunately for me, he was ten years older than I and comparisons were reasonably at arms length.

Without a conscious plan, I very closely followed in his footsteps, although falling short of his many accomplishments.

In high school, he played the trumpet virtuosically and played on the offensive line in football. I played trumpet and played offensive line. In college, he was Phi Beta Kappa. I DID graduate. Among the languages in which he was fluent, was French. I studied French and on multiple trips to Paris, spoke it enthusiastically, sounding not unlike Tonto I'm sure. Ralph helped make the world safe for democracy by fighting commies on the Bering Sea. I fought commies in Berlin. I moved to NYC as did Ralph ten years before me and joined the pharmaceutical industry.

He left for Chicago. I left for Massachusetts. He came back to NY for a period, as did I and we lived relatively near each other. He in Bedford and I in Newburgh. We both finally moved west ... Colorado and Texas. Coincidences abounded but full disclosure ... I was a better offensive lineman.

Louis Dellefave - March 09 at 01:23 PM

RM

“ Claire, so sorry to hear about Ralph's passing. We enjoyed meeting Ralph and seeing his great sheet music collection. Greg and I are holding you and your family in the Light. Rebecca Morris and Greg Shubert

Rebecca Morris - March 04 at 03:55 PM

SM

“ Ralph has been a very special member of an informal singing group I lead for people who love singing the “older” songs. We would always joke about the fact that he came because he knew all the songs and could keep everybody on pitch. The thing is - he did! His physical presence will be missed so much, but I do believe he’s going to still be present, though in a way that we can’t see him with our eyes. He will be in my heart always.

Sandra Meyer - March 01 at 05:09 PM

NB

“ What I remember so clearly is the first time I was at his and Clair's home and the pride he had showing me his collection of sheet music - the reverence with which he talked gave an insight into how important it was...so glad to know where it is housed.

Natalie Barnes - February 24 at 02:52 PM

MC

“ When I worked for American Airlines,Ralph called me one day to say he was in DFW flying to Mexico City,so I upgraded him to first class.He said to me,I appreciate it but my boss is in coach and it wouldn’t be right,so he gave his seat to his boss.Ralph was a gentle man,rest in peace among angels.

Mickey Cafaro - February 23 at 11:19 PM