



Raymond J. Rolak

March 11, 1951 - January 8, 2022

Raymond Joseph Rolak, 70, passed peacefully in his home on January 8, 2022 in Canton, MI. He is preceded in death by his parents, John and Angela Rolak. He is survived by his son, Josef (Taylor Steele) Rolak and granddaughter, Willow Rolak. He is also survived by his siblings, Rita (predeceased Stanley) Moraniec, Ronald (Gloria) Rolak, twin sister Rayneld (Walter) Johnson and many nieces, nephews and cousins. Born on March 11, 1951, Raymond was raised in northwest Detroit, educated at St. Scholastica elementary, Cooley HS (1969), and Wayne State U. (1973). Reflecting his lifelong love of learning, Ray attained additional certifications including, Peer Support Counseling, Mastery of Forestry Management and Diplomat of Aviation Safety. During early professional years, Ray worked for the Detroit Parks & Recreation Dept. in program development and coaching. Athletically, he played and coached hockey and baseball in high school, college and later for the semi-pro baseball team, Inland Tool Manufacturing (ITM). Following, Raymond worked for Delta airlines for twenty-nine years as a flight attendant and training manager and then retired. Additionally, Raymond developed ROLCO, a sports broadcasting business and was active in media production, sports commentating and planning of events such as the Silver Sword Classic basketball tournament in Maui, HI. He also served as president of the Detroit Sports Broadcasting Association.

Raymond remained engaged in writing, speaking, filmmaking and event planning for the rest of his life and continued his lifelong passion for sports

through these endeavors.

As a talented creative writer and speaker, Raymond developed and presented numerous lively sports themed enrichment programs at the Plymouth District Library such as Town Baseball and Baseball in the Movies. He also authored many sports related articles that were published in newspapers, magazines and digital publications. And he wrote the foreword for the book, Tribes: An International Hockey History by Darril and George Fosty.

Proud of his heritage, Raymond spearheaded program events at the Detroit Tigers Polish-American night and Polish-American Heritage Day at Eastern Michigan University. Related to coaching, Raymond was invited to teach baseball skills as part of a 2016 summer program for youths in Poland. One purpose of the program was to ignite interest in baseball in anticipation of the sport rejoining the 2020 Summer Olympic Games. Raymond said the experience was a special highlight for him. Additionally, in the early 1990s Raymond was Chairman of the Board of the National Polish-American Sports Hall of Fame and remained on the Sports Panel Council till current times. Early in his career while working for Detroit Parks & Recreation, Raymond was selected to have a role in the TV movie, One in a Million: The Ron LeFlore Story. Interest in the film industry resurfaced during later years exemplified through his co-production of the movies, Get a Job and Kuleana Maui, filmed and produced in Maui, HI. Ray often wore a Hawaiian shirt to reflect his affection for the aloha spirit.

Ray lived a full life rich in experiences. Through his airline work, Ray enjoyed world travel, visited every continent and embraced many cultural traditions and cuisines. Loving people, Ray developed wonderful long lasting friendships and touched the lives of many. Appreciating the value in others, Ray coached and pushed for their best. And he recognized others' achievements. As an author, producer, filmmaker and speaker, his stories and entertainment offered unique, colorful and spirited experiences. Raymond always expressed gratitude to those who shaped his life and made his life journey so wonderful. Family and friends may pay tribute at Gathering Saturday, February 26th 10

AM until the 11 AM Funeral Mass at St. John Neumann Catholic Church, 44800 Warren Road, Canton, MI 48187. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Plymouth District Library, plymouthlibrary.org or National Polish-American Sports Hall of Fame, PolishSportsHOF.com. To share a memory, please use the Share a Memory tab on this web page.

Previous Events

Gathering of Family and Friends

FEB **26**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. John Neumann Catholic Church
44800 Warren Road
Canton, MI 48187

Funeral Mass

FEB **26**. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

St. John Neumann Catholic Church
44800 Warren Road
Canton, MI 48187

Tribute Wall



“ *Raymond J. Rolak*

December 07, 2023 at 05:11 AM



“ *I first met Ray at high school football practice and we were both proud to make varsity our first year at Cooley. He was one of the nicest guys on the team.*

You will be in our memories

Steve Salo

Steve Salo - March 01, 2022 at 05:23 PM



“ *When Ray was a teenager, he met with a student group at our home. He was a generous and a grateful guy. As the years passed, Ray would call from afar to reawaken our friendship. I will miss those calls.*

Rest In peace, Ray . . .

Sharon Jourdan

Sharon Jourdan - February 28, 2022 at 09:20 AM

TJ

“ Dear Ray: Thanks for all of the great memories. Thank you to the Rolak Family for welcoming those of us from Ray's Republic Airlines training class that were based in Detroit. Thank you for somehow arranging for beachfront lodging in Maui-for free!! Thank you for organizing and hosting a party for my graduation from Eastern Michigan. On behalf of Rick, Nate, Nate's dad, Fenzl and Dan, thank you for all of the free tickets to any sporting event anyone could imagine. Thank you for being a part of my wedding. Thank you for all of the Rolco events that we attended with me as your cameraman and my Marty Moraniec press pass around my neck. Thank you for showing me Detroit, the bar in Hamtramck with nickel beers and pigeon racing. Ray: Thank you for being in my life for over 40 years and Thank you for being my friend. You will be missed, but never forgotten. I love you buddy-rest in peace.

Tom Johnson

Tom Johnson - February 25, 2022 at 06:52 PM

TJ

“ 8 files added to the album Memories Album



Tom Johnson - February 25, 2022 at 06:28 PM

PJ

“ *God Bless Ray and the Rolak family. I remember playing on his Tiger Pepsi baseball team. A very nice guy.*

Paul Janas - February 06, 2022 at 08:01 AM

AD

“ *The news of Raymond’s death was heartbreaking. Despite the passing years, he always seemed youthful. We have known Ray for decades, and we are thankful for that gift.*

There was a sparkle about him that endeared him to so many, certainly to us. His ready smile, a mix of warm and playful, brightened every room and every airplane that he entered. Among his countless qualities, Raymond possessed the disarming ability to ‘dine with paupers and princes’ with equal ease. He was a gentleman.

Godspeed Raymond, Anne DelCampo and Paul Eschenburg

Anne DelCampo - February 03, 2022 at 12:19 PM



“ *Alina Klin lit a candle in memory of Raymond J. Rolak*



Alina Klin - February 02, 2022 at 05:56 PM



“ 10 files added to the album Memories Album



Alina Klin - February 02, 2022 at 05:26 PM



Ray was a great friend and supporter of the WSU Polish Studies. Students enjoyed talking to him, learning from him and being inspired by him during the yearly Career Day. Ray's expertise was invaluable to the Ethnic Layers of Detroit project. Ray also helped with the WSU Polish Club Wigilias, which he enjoyed attending very much. We will miss you, Ray. RIP.

Alina Klin - February 02, 2022 at 05:44 PM



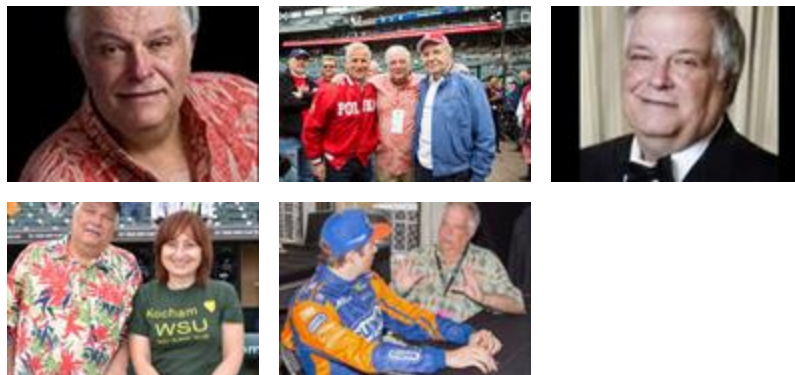
“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Joanna Yates - January 22, 2022 at 11:37 PM

JY

“ My beloved Cousin Raymond --R.I.P. Love sincerely, Cousin Ju-Ju Jr. XOXO Eternal rest grant onto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. AMEN.



Joanna Yates - January 22, 2022 at 08:58 PM

MR

“ Sorry to hear of Ray's passing. We grew up together in the old neighborhood and met frequently to share and remember stories from those days. I'll miss our texts discussing the current events in the sports world. Last time we talked, he was on his way to the MAC championship game. A fitting final memory of our lifelong friendship.

Mike Rand - January 21, 2022 at 07:58 AM

SF

“ I worked with Ray at delta airlines and saw him outside of work also he was such a nice and caring man and he will be missed

Sally Vanos Fielding - January 19, 2022 at 09:57 AM

NW

Ray was always doing this or that, would see him around town. He always had a kind word and happy to see you.

Nikki Ward - January 19, 2022 at 01:00 PM

MA

Raymond was a unique individual who made everyone feel loved.

Marge - January 19, 2022 at 01:26 PM

LP

I knew Ray for a very long time and he once set up a book signing for me at the Plymouth Library. Only a month ago he said we would get together and perhaps have another book signing or he'd ask me to speak at a function. And baseball also was a shared pastime.

Larry Paladino - January 19, 2022 at 03:24 PM

LM

A true gentleman! Ray's knowledge and respect for those who shaped history was profound. He always was looking out for the little guy, the sport player who fell on bad times and seeing that they were remembered. You're greatly missed. Welcome home!

Lauren B Zoschnick MD - January 19, 2022 at 05:27 PM

GE

Ray was a one-of-a-kind person. We will miss him on the Detroit sports scene. May God grant him eternal rest and reward.

George Eichorn - January 20, 2022 at 11:42 AM

PH

Ray - you are missed. There's not a day that goes by that something doesn't remind me of you. You were a character and a friend! It was a pleasure knowing you. I know you are bending someone's ear upstairs - Aloha

Patty Harkenrider

patty harkenrider - January 20, 2022 at 03:42 PM

HS

Ray and I were in the same training class at then Republic Airlines, later NWA and now Delta, in Mar 1980. Wow, 42 years ago. He kept in touch with people in our class and would keep everyone up to date. He truly was one of a kind, and had such a warm heart. He will be truly missed. Holly Scarpelli

Holly Scarpelli - January 21, 2022 at 10:41 AM

EI

His spirit was so caring, joyful and fun. He stepped on my flight just a few months ago, gave me a copy of the movie and we chatted it up during the flight. He's a really good guy.

Elaine Warren ICE - January 21, 2022 at 12:27 PM

HO

Working with Ray at Republic Airlines was always a pleasure! He had a unique way of making people feel welcome with his open personality and warm smile. I don't believe that Ray ever knew a stranger and his success with the public was outstanding! God bless him.

Helen O'Brien - January 22, 2022 at 11:15 AM

CR

Sad news.

charlie roebuck - January 22, 2022 at 01:28 PM

JE

Ray was one of a kind, always quick with a smile and for me a great sports buddy. I met as we were in the same flight attendant training class. Once while living in the Detroit area, I attended a Tigers baseball game with Ray. Much to my surprise/enjoyment we walked right into the Tigers dressing room, where of course he knew people. Working together for Republic Airlines, Ray and I worked a trip that overnighted in Phoenix. Ray met a guy on the plane that managed a local bar, so we had a lot of free drinks that night. As we crept back into the hotel about 2am, we were spotted by the flight Captain, First Officer and a female flight attendant. But since they were drinking in the hot tub we knew we were not in trouble.....

What a fun, friendly, lovable guy he was. They don't make 'em like that anymore

Joe Ernstes - Feb 1, 2022

Joe Ernstes - February 01, 2022 at 04:28 PM

AS

*He was more than once a guest on my radio show "Polish Magazine-Magazyn Polski" (2000-2014, 99.1 FM, in our Windsor/Detroit area). He was an expert in sports news, besides, Mr. Rolak was a very kind and friendly person.
RiP Mr. Ray Rolak*

Arleta Sziler - February 02, 2022 at 02:59 PM

RS

Dear Raymond, you were loved and entertained so many with your imagination and antics. There was a group of us who hung around together in the mid 70's: Tom, Ron, Jim, Ellen and another Ron. both Rons have preceded him in death. May you fly with angels and entertain in heaven. My sincere condolences to the family. Renee

Renee Swain - February 06, 2022 at 05:05 PM

MR

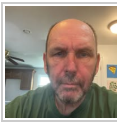
So many wonderful memories shared with Raymond down through the years! An innovator, 'go getter', who always had 'a project' to share with others! And a story to tell! A heart of gold, and a great friend. Rest easy, buddy. You are eternally missed by all. With God's blessings. Michael Reghi

Michael Reghi - February 22, 2022 at 11:44 AM

JG

*Rest In Peace Raymond
Remembering you fondly,
Jacqueline George*

Jacqueline George - May 20, 2022 at 07:20 AM



My condolences to the Rolak family. Ray was a fantastic person. In the past, he occasionally wrote for our Boxscore World Sportswire. He was also kind enough to write the Foreword for my brother's and my book, Tribes: An International Hockey History. We would occasionally talk over the phone and his perspective and sporting knowledge was always appreciated. He will be missed. May he rest in peace.

George Fosty - June 12, 2022 at 06:09 PM