



James J. Tortorici Jr.

August 13, 1941 - October 7, 2024

Clifton Park, NY – James J. Tortorici, 83, of Clifton Park passed away at home on October 7 surrounded by love. Jim was born on August 13, 1941, in Albany, NY. He spent his early years in Albany’s Arbor Hill, where he attended St. Joseph’s Academy, graduating in 1959. After earning degrees from Siena College and Niagara University, Jim engaged in postgraduate study in Philosophy and Anthropology at Harvard University, where he had the good fortune to be invited by Dr. Rodney Needham of Oxford University to participate in a select colloquium on the subject of Faith.

Jim’s entire career brought him great joy. He served the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany first at St. Anthony’s Parish in Schenectady and then at Our Lady of Victory Parish in Troy from 1968-1974, when he also taught Theology at Catholic Central High School. Subsequently, in 1974, Jim joined the Shenendehowa Central School District, where he taught English in the high school until his retirement in 2001. Over the years, Jim received many notes and visits from former students who spoke of the lasting impact he had on both their personal and professional lives. Of him, it might be said: “The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind.” – Khalil Gibran

While he most loved his years teaching, he also cherished all initiatives related to education and union leadership. His respect for his colleagues and

academic leadership impacted his career in diverse and substantive ways. Often called upon to write articles, give presentations, or consult on education and labor issues, he always demonstrated respect for students, teachers, and academia in general.

Jim's interests were many and varied. An avid reader, his library included philosophy, literature, multi-religious studies, mystery and both fiction and non-fiction. He loved chess, enjoyed any game or social event with friends, and travel with family and friends. Jim was grateful to have studied Tai Chi, to have earned a black belt in Kokorokan Karate at the age of 56, and to have studied piano as an adult at the Carondelet Music Center. However, few things appealed to him as much as a good walk around the neighborhood both in New York and Florida, where it would take him forever because he was known to visit with EVERYONE. His second favorite activity was surely a ride around Saratoga Lake in any season (regardless of the weather)!

Those who knew Jim will know of his great respect for each person, his unlimited compassion, and his benign generosity. His presence will be greatly missed by family and friends.

Jim is survived by his loving wife Vivian (Ham) Tortorici and dear family friend Colleen Finn, his sister Helene (Mark) Herskowitz, his nephew Greg Henzel, his grandniece Zoe Henzel, and several close family friends and cousins. Jim is predeceased by his parents Helen (Meineker) and James Tortorici, his very special Aunt Marion (Meineker) and Uncle Paul Mayham, his beloved niece Jill-Marie Henzel, and several additional aunts, uncles and cousins.

The Tortorici Family wishes to thank Jim's many caregivers at both NYOH and Community Hospice of Saratoga County. Those who wish may offer contributions in Jim's name to The Community Hospice Foundation, 310 Manning Blvd., Albany, NY 12208.

Relatives and friends are invited to visit with Jim's family Thursday, October 17, 2024 10:30 am to 12:00 pm at Corpus Christi Church, 2001 US-9, Round Lake, NY 12151. His Funeral Mass will follow at 12:00 pm.

The Rite of Committal will be held at St. Agnes Cemetery immediately following the Mass.

To leave a message for the family please visit www.McveighFuneralHome.com

Cemetery Details

St. Agnes Cemetery

48 Cemetery Ave
Menands, NY

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT 17. 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Corpus Christi Church
2001 Route 9
Round Lake, NY 12151

Funeral Mass

OCT 17. 12:00 PM (ET)

Corpus Christi Church
2001 Route 9
Round Lake, NY 12151

Tribute Wall



“ *McVeigh Funeral Home, Inc. created a Tribute Video in memory of James J. Tortorici Jr.*



McVeigh Funeral Home, Inc. - October 16, 2024 at 04:35 PM



“ *Dear Viv, you have been coming to mind frequently. I looked you up and came upon Jim's Obituary. I live in Albany and would like to see you! Probably after the holidays are over would be best. My cell number is 518-949-5134.*

Chris Colarusso - December 23, 2025 at 12:28 PM



“ *Joseph P. purchased a sympathy card for the family of James J. Tortorici Jr..*



Joseph P. - November 18, 2024 at 10:55 AM

CM

“ *What an amazing human being Jim was! Many of us became teachers at the same time at Shenendehowa, and bravely went out on strike before we even had tenure! I treasure knowing him as a teacher and union rep. He always had a quick, ready smile, and hearty laugh. He was a joy to be around. He has left a profound legacy, one to be very proud of. Heartfelt condolences to his whole family and close friends. The world certainly needs more people like Jim!*

Charelle Mac Masters - October 19, 2024 at 01:54 PM

EH

“ *Jim was a great guy who I always respected while working with him at Shen. He is remembered fondly .*

Eileen Harren - October 17, 2024 at 07:01 PM

JS

“ *James S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James J. Tortorici Jr..*

James S. - October 17, 2024 at 08:22 AM



“ 152 files added to the album *LifeTributes*



McVeigh Funeral Home, Inc. - October 16, 2024 at 12:29 PM

NG

“ *So sad to learn of Jim's passing He was a wonderful man and it was a pleasure to work with him at Shenendehowa HS Truly a life well lived! Please accept my sincere sympathy at this sad time Nancy Guarelia-Burke*

Nancy Guarelia-Burke - October 16, 2024 at 12:26 PM

KS

“*Mr. Tortorici. One of the greats. I had the privilege of having Mr. Tortorici as an English teacher in 1997 and 1998, for World Literature and Literature of Decision. World Literature was a delight- I would look forward to Mr. Tortorici's class every day, and he could make the driest subjects come to life. We would belly laugh as he spiced up Greek mythology by adding in periodic dragons seeking cookies. He taught me how to think deeply, push myself, and hone my craft as a writer. Lit Decision was another class I went to eagerly each day- it was the first class that captivated me with the power of an idea. We would debate the underlying philosophies of the literature, and nothing made Mr. Tortorici happier than when we all really got full into debate on powerful ideas. I remember clearly heated arguments about whether as people, we could ever be purely altruistic, and what power altruism could and should hold in a society. Thanks to you, Mr. Tortorici, I was inspired to get a philosophy minor in college, chasing that high of the deep, well-reasoned clash of ideas in a meeting of minds that I first experienced in your class. Most importantly, Mr. Tortorici was a soft landing place for me. I was a weird, awkward kiddo, who didn't know (or care to,) stand down when pressed by someone who had greater social standing. Mr. Tortorici would masterfully shut down the kids who would make cutting, snide remarks to me about my appearance, or my upbringing- he made me feel seen and whole at a really difficult time in my life.*

Mr. Tortorici, your education was art. You helped shape me into the middle school English teacher I am today. The delight I take in my students as they catch the spark of an idea and grow it to flame and the twinkle in my eye as I say, "Now, let me play Devil's advocate for a minute," and throw a rebuttal to them to wrestle with are an echo of and toast to you. I am lucky to have been your student, and your legacy already lives on.

Much love to you, Mr. Tortorici's loved ones, as you navigate this loss. May his memory become a blessing.

Kerry (Cranfield) Sangster, former student and current proud English teacher, Shenendehowa Class of 2000.

Kerry Sangster - October 15, 2024 at 09:56 PM

RC

“ 1979 and you two offered me a place to stay for a few weeks while Joe and I relocated. We will never forget your generosity and kindness. A life well lived. So sorry for your loss, Vivian.

RoseMarie Carey - October 14, 2024 at 08:40 AM

MB

“ Vivian,
I am so sorry for your loss. I had Jim (Fr. T) for religion at CCHS, It was always an interesting class. Making religion interesting to high school students is a true gift. You were very helpful in my decision to attend Trinity College which proved to be a great choice for me. While in college, I heard that you and Jim got married. So happy for both of you to have spend many happy years together. I send my prayers and peace to you in the days ahead.
Mary Bradley, CCHS '72

Mary Bradley - October 13, 2024 at 01:57 PM

SF

“ Seabury family purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of James J. Tortorici Jr..



Seabury family - October 12, 2024 at 04:50 PM

KL

“ Kristina L. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James J. Tortorici Jr..

Kristina L. - October 12, 2024 at 09:36 AM

VE

“ Virginia E. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James J. Tortorici Jr..

Virginia E. - October 11, 2024 at 09:50 PM



“ Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of James J. Tortorici Jr..



October 11, 2024 at 10:43 AM

MS

“ Maria and Susan purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of James J. Tortorici Jr..



Maria and Susan - October 10, 2024 at 03:25 PM

JM

“ We, as family, loved him so much! We have so many fond memories of John's cousin! Hoping our prayers will comfort Vivian! Jim was an amazing man who was full of knowledge, grace and always had a smile and a hug for you!



John & Lorraine Meineker - October 10, 2024 at 11:51 AM