



John Ziemba

December 25, 1933 - April 19, 2025

John Matthew Ziemba, the namesake father of long-time high school basketball coach and hoop star from Garfield, NJ, passed away at 91 on Saturday morning at Emerson Health and Rehabilitation Center. Mr. Ziemba was born in Passaic, NJ, on December 25, 1933, and was the youngest of 11 siblings.

A veteran of the Army, Mr. Ziemba worked for three decades at Continental Can Company in Paterson, NJ. He took great pride in purchasing a home with his wife, Carmen, in Garfield in 1964 for \$29,999 on his modest salary. Despite facing adversity, including raising his only child, John, alone after Carmen passed away from cancer at the age of 57 on September 10, 1988, he remained resilient. He stayed in the same house until his death.

For Mr. Ziemba, the basketball court was a sanctuary shared with his son and later with his grandson, Jason. He found immense joy in watching John become a Hall of Fame basketball player at Garfield High School, a Hall of Honor Selection at Montclair State College, and an inductee into the New Jersey State Coaches Hall of Fame. He also treasured seeing his grandson, Jason become Emerson high school's all-time leading three-point shooter, with 122 career threes from 2021 to 2024. Mr. Ziemba compiled dozens of scrapbooks documenting every box score from his son's and grandson's careers, and he saved envelopes of directions for every game he attended

before GPS was invented.

Mr. Ziemba's journey in basketball began when he coached John from second grade to high school, cheering him on throughout his career. Over his 36 years of coaching basketball at Passaic Valley, Fort Lee, and Emerson, Coach Ziemba estimates that, combining the games he watched of him and Jason playing and nearly 1,000 games he coached, Mr. Ziemba saw more basketball games than anyone in Bergen County.

"At a time when people can act out of control at games, my dad never said a word," said Coach Ziemba. "He was the kind of fan you wanted in the stands. He never lost his temper and never complained about calls, though he would always have a dig at me when we lost."

One of Mr. Ziemba's goals was to watch Jason excel on his high school basketball team and to attend his graduation. "He was very happy that he lived long enough to see Jason complete high school," Coach Ziemba said.

Outside of basketball, Mr. Ziemba was a beloved and active member of the Polkamaniacs for 25 years, starting in 1990. He traveled and danced at various venues and attended concerts by Jimmy Sturr, known as the "King of Polka," and other well-known artists.

John is survived by his son, John; his grandson, Jason; and his daughter-in-law, Tracey.

Cemetery Details

St. Michael's Cemetery

120 Saddle River Avenue
South Hackensack, NJ 07606

Previous Events

Visitation

APR **24**. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Kamienski Funeral Home of Garfield
207 Ray Street
Garfield, NJ 07026

Burial

APR **26**. 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Michael's Cemetery
120 Saddle River Avenue
South Hackensack, NJ 07606

Tribute Wall

LF

“ Love Shenkman Family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of John Ziemba.



Love Shenkman Family - April 24, 2025 at 08:53 AM

LF

“ Love Shenkman Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of John Ziemba.

Love Shenkman Family - April 24, 2025 at 08:53 AM

GA

“ Glickson's (Mark, Raquel, Dave & Ana) purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of John Ziemba.



Glickson's (Mark, Raquel, Dave & Ana) - April 23, 2025 at 10:06 PM

GA

“ Glickson's (Mark, Raquel, Dave & Ana) planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of John Ziemba.

Glickson's (Mark, Raquel, Dave & Ana) - April 23, 2025 at 10:06 PM

TF

“ *The Dolan Family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of John Ziemba.*



The Dolan Family - April 23, 2025 at 12:20 PM

TF

“ *The Dolan Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of John Ziemba.*

The Dolan Family - April 23, 2025 at 12:20 PM

GB

“ *GHS Administration & GHS Basketball purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of John Ziemba.*



GHS Administration & GHS Basketball - April 23, 2025 at 09:05 AM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of John Ziemba.*



April 22, 2025 at 05:24 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of John Ziemba.

April 22, 2025 at 05:24 PM



“ Marc B. purchased the Strength and Wisdom Casket Spray for the family of John Ziemba.



Marc B. - April 22, 2025 at 05:22 PM



“ Marc B. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of John Ziemba.

Marc B. - April 22, 2025 at 05:22 PM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of John Ziemba.



April 22, 2025 at 01:16 PM

JT

“ John Piccirillo & The Basketball Team purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of John Ziemba.



John Piccirillo & The Basketball Team - April 21, 2025 at 08:43 PM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of John Ziemba.



April 21, 2025 at 08:04 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of John Ziemba.

April 21, 2025 at 08:04 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of John Ziemba.



April 21, 2025 at 12:57 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of John Ziemba.

April 21, 2025 at 12:57 PM



“ Always a chuckle or a funny remembrance; always a gesture of encouragement. I am so blessed to have remained friends with John long after the Polka dancing faded. I will miss you John! Vicky Gustafson

Vicky Gustafson - April 21, 2025 at 10:43 AM