



Hon. Mathilde (Caliva) Bersani

OCT 12, 1922 - NOV 15, 2023



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Hon. Mathilde (Caliva) Bersani

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Born October 12, 1922 in Syracuse New York, Mathilde was raised on the north side of the city by loving parents Dr. Salvatore and Elizabeth Caliva and brother Francis. Born at a time when women were limited in career opportunities, Mathilde was one of the first women to graduate from Syracuse University College of Law in 1944. Her commitment to the legal profession, and empowering women was her life's passion. The pinnacle of her career was her appointment as first woman City Court Judge in March 1978. In November 1978 she ran and was successfully elected to this seat. In 1982 she was appointed supervising Judge. In addition to the New York State bar, she was admitted to the Bar of the United States Supreme Court in 1980.

Her career also included private practice, Assistant District Attorney for Onondaga County, Adjunct Professor Syracuse University, Assistant Corporation Counsel and Commissioner of Weights and Measures for the City of Syracuse. Mathilde lectured on the importance of financial independence for women and presented papers on the legal status of women.

She received many awards including the Post Standard Women of Achievement, Boys Town of Italy Woman of the Year, and on her 100th Birthday Mayor Walsh proclaimed October 12, 2022, Mathilde Caliva Bersani Recognition Day in the City of Syracuse. She was affiliated with the National Association of Women Judges, American Bar Association, New York Bar Association, Board member of Crouse Irving Hospital, Women's Auxiliary of St. Joseph's Hospital, YMCA, Everson Museum of Art, Zonta, and Daughters of Columbus. During retirement she volunteered and wrote short stories about her childhood and mystery stories about her female friends who played an important part in her life.

She will be remembered for her love of chocolate, ballet, fresh flowers, carvel sundaes, the Golden Girls, her Camaro, pink foil lipstick, using Ponds cold cream daily, wearing pink and purple and sneaking her grandchildren Hershey kisses when they were little.



Obituary

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Mathilde was incredibly fortunate to have had a life well lived that could not have been possible without some very special people. Marsha, our amazing friend who managed all her care, and the loving attention from Sue, Shannon, Bridget, Robyn, Margaret, Jillian, Kathy, Tiffany, Aubrey, Shannon F, Sabrina, and Jackie.

Predeceased by her brother, Dr. Francis Caliva, her son, Henry Bersani Jr. PhD., and husband Henry Bersani Sr., Mathilde is survived by her daughter Maribeth Bersani, daughter in law Lynda Bersani, grandchildren Lisa Bersani and Alexander Bersani, great granddaughter Callie Bersani and several nieces and nephews.

A steady diet of chocolate is credited with Mathilde's longevity! To honor Mathilde please enjoy a box of chocolates with someone you love. A private family service will be held.



Tribute Wall

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Anthony Pietrafesa posted:

Great woman , enjoyed appearing before her. Wonderful family. Blessings

January 21 at 4:04 PM



Marian Carfagno posted:

Mathilde was a faithful volunteer at WCNY's Read-Out program for several years. I had the pleasure of knowing Mathilde since I was in charge of the Read-Out program while she was there as a volunteer. She was delightful. We shared many conversations and I enjoyed talking to her about all sorts of things. Something I did not know is that her birthday and mine were just 1 day apart, although several years apart since I was born in 1944, the year she graduated from Law School. She was always a pleasure to be around and was very helpful to the other volunteers that she read with. I'm sure she will be missed by all that knew her. Marian Carfagno

December 8 at 7:27 AM



Mary F. planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Mathilde.



November 20 at 3:16 PM



Charlene McGraw posted:

Judge Bersani was a wonderful role model and mentor to us----the newly admitted women attorneys in the early 1980s. We all learned so much from her and respected her greatly. I am sorry for your loss. Charlene McGraw

November 17 at 6:44 PM



Patricia Nappi sent a virtual gift in honor of Mathilde.

To the Great Honorable Judge Mathilde (Caliva) Bersaani ,May you Rest In Eternal Peace and god bless you for all your good works from the Family of Kathryn and Patrick Nappi and her Daughter Patricia A Nappi and Family ,May your family find Peace from God 🙏🙏🙏



November 17 at 9:00 AM



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Patrick W Aregano lit a candle in honor of Mathilde.

"Rest In Peace" Judge Mathilde Bersani.

November 17 at 5:08 AM



Tony Russo lit a candle in honor of Mathilde.

November 17 at 4:41 AM



Renee Rendino lit a candle in honor of Mathilde.

November 17 at 1:30 AM





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LM

Lisa Tepper Mitchell posted:

Maribeth and family, I am so sorry to hear of your mom's passing. I remember her as a spitfire when our parents spent time on the Cape, or in one or the others kitchen. I always think of her when I see your old house when I drive through the old neighborhood. You are in my thoughts and prayers. And I'm stocking up on chocolate, the good stuff!

November 16 at 8:30 PM

VI

Vivian November 24 at 8:48 AM

To the family: So sorry for your loss. Mrs. Mathilde Bersani was such a tremendous role model. I had the good fortune of spending time with the family during a getaway and I witnessed how she truly lived life to the fullest. Even, still, at Mrs. Bersani's 100th birthday, she was surrounded by friends and treated with respect. She was blessed with the most devoted and caring daughter, who remained by her side even through the last difficult days. She will be missed.

MB

Maribeth Bersani November 18 at 2:50 AM

Lisa you and your family were so loved by all of us. Thank you for reaching out. Maribeth

LM

Lisa Tepper Mitchell November 17 at 3:12 PM

Lynda, I still make her carrot cake with cream cheese frosting, which I think she made for your special day. So sorry to hear that Hank joined that party too early as well. Have some Cape Cod pictures you all may not have ever seen before. Would love to be able to share them with you so you could share with the rest of your family. I'm at mitchell1060@gmail.com. Hugs to all ❤️

MA

Melanie W. Avery November 17 at 12:11 PM

I did not know Judge Bersani personally. Her obituary caught my eye. It sounds like she was an amazing woman. What a role model for all women to study. Her family has every right to be very proud of her. May their memories of her comfort them and keep her alive in their hearts.

LB

Lynda Bersani November 17 at 10:59 AM

Thank you, Lisa! I remember those days... Your mom was such a great companion to Mathilde and she always made me laugh. Hank and I invited her to our very small and simple wedding because she was so special to Mathilde (and to me too in a different way.) She declared it the nicest wedding she'd ever attended! Of course, we loved her even more after that. So sorry she didn't eat more chocolate. 😞 She was gone too soon.



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Mathilde by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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