



Jay G. Bernhardt

JAN 31, 1943 - JUL 20, 2025



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Jay G. Bernhardt

JAN 31, 1943 - JUL 20, 2025

Jay Garner Bernhardt, affectionately known as “Jay Bird,” passed away peacefully on July 20, 2025, in Syracuse, NY, surrounded by his loving family. He was 82.

Born on January 31, 1943, in Cooperstown, NY, Jay was raised in nearby Richfield Springs — a town that would remain close to his heart for the rest of his life.

A fearless entrepreneur and visionary, Jay built a legacy through hard work, ingenuity, and unshakable tenacity. For over four decades, he owned and operated multiple business ventures, most notably founding and leading JGB Enterprises, Inc. in Liverpool, NY. Under his leadership, the company grew to employ nearly 300 people, earning Jay a reputation as a firm but fair leader, deeply respected by his staff and peers alike. He was truly one of a kind.

Later in life, Jay turned his passion for history and preservation into a mission to restore his beloved hometown. He purchased and revitalized several historic properties on Main Street in Richfield Springs, breathing new life into the village’s architectural heritage. He also revived The Mercury, the long-defunct local newspaper, reaffirming his commitment to community and legacy.

A true sports enthusiast, Jay cheered passionately for the Notre Dame Fighting Irish, enjoyed watching UFC, and was a dedicated collector of historic postcards and relics. He was also a proud member of the Elks and a generous supporter of many charitable organizations.

Jay was never one to shy away from a challenge, whether in business or family. He could reach anyone on the other end of a phone call, and he never took “no” for an answer. There were never any problems, only opportunities. With a sharp wit and unmatched charm, he had the rare ability to sell anything to anyone — but more importantly, he had the heart to help anyone in need. Whether offering advice, support, or resources, Jay never hesitated to lift up those around him. His life’s true impact will always be the love and devotion he had for his family and his friends.



Obituary

Jay G. Bernhardt

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He was preceded in death by his parents, H. Edward and Joyce (House) Bernhardt, and his brothers, Douglas and Robert.

Jay is survived by his devoted wife of 48 years, Kathleen (Polge) Bernhardt; his daughter, Erica (Daniel) Pigula; his son, Jason (Ana) Bernhardt; his father-in-law and special friend, Albert Polge; his beloved grandchildren: Albert, Jay Daniel, Kayleen, Bernardo, and Sammy; brother/sisters-in-laws, nieces, nephews, cousins, and many close members of the Polge family, as well as his beloved friends in Juno Beach, FL.

Jay's legacy of bold vision, relentless drive, and genuine goodwill will live on through the countless lives he touched. Although his health issues compromised his faculties in his final years, his true nature, his larger-than-life ideas, and all the old JGB hoser stories will be forever cherished by those who cared for him.

A funeral Mass in celebration of Jay's life will be held at 10:00 am on Tuesday, July 29, 2025 at Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception Church, 259 E. Onondaga St., Syracuse, NY 13202, followed by entombment in St. Mary's Cemetery Mausoleum, DeWitt, NY. Family and friends may call from 4:00 – 7:00 pm on Monday, July 28, 2025 at THOMAS J. PIRRO JR. FUNERAL HOME, 3401 Vickery Rd. (corner of Buckley Rd.) Syracuse, NY 13212.

In lieu of flowers, contributions in Jay's name may be made to one's favorite charity.

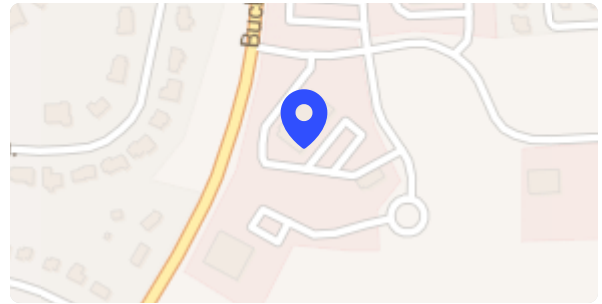


Events

Jay G. Bernhardt
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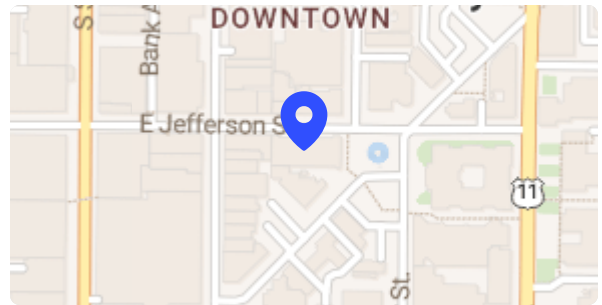
Visitation

- Monday**, July 28, 2025
- 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM ET
- Thomas J. Pirro Jr. Funeral Home**
3401 Vickery Rd, Syracuse NY 13212



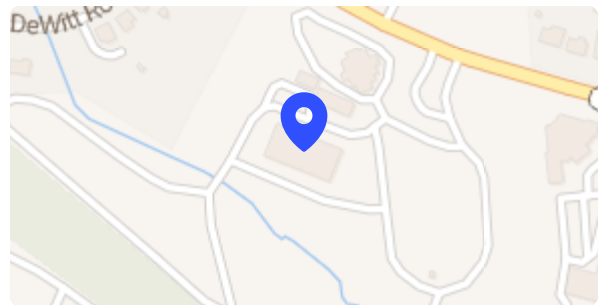
Funeral Mass

- Tuesday**, July 29, 2025
- 10:00 AM ET
- Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception**
259 E. Onondaga St., Syracuse NY 13202



Cemetery Details

- St. Mary's Mausoleum**
4100 East Genesee Street, DeWitt NY 13214
- 475-4639**



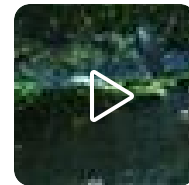


Tribute Wall

Jay G. Bernhardt
JAN 31, 1943 - JUL 20, 2025



Thomas J. Pirro Jr. Funeral Home shared a **Tribute Video**.



July 28 at 5:59 AM



Katie Mearon posted:

Sending thoughts and prayers to Bernhardt family .

July 28 at 11:57 AM



Jeffrey Scharoun posted:

Bernhardt family,I am so sorry for your loss.I am so grateful to Jay for always having an open door to a kid that probably asked too many questions and had too many half-baked ideas. Entrusting me to a wide array of projects as a young intern, Jay equipped me with an experience that would be a solid foundation wherever I chose to direct my career. I will never forget him for taking a chance on me and allowing me a front row seat to learn from his success and good judgement. To Kathy, Erica and Jason, here's offering my deepest condolences.Jeffrey Scharoun

July 28 at 10:43 AM



Le Moyne College, Office Of Alumni posted:

Please accept the most heartfelt sympathies of Le Moyne College. We hope the love and memories that you will forever hold in your heart bring you peace and comfort during this difficult time.

July 28 at 10:12 AM



The Liverpool Businessmen's Golf League sent a Peaceful White Lilies Basket to the Bernhardt family.



July 28 at 5:35 AM



Kevin And The Dugan Family, Love Ya. sent a Peaceful White Lilies Basket to the Bernhardt family.



July 28 at 4:37 AM



Tribute Wall

Jay G. Bernhardt
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Kevin And The Dugan Family, Love Ya. planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Jay.

July 28 at 4:37 AM



Joyce Hayes lit a candle in honor of Jay.

July 27 at 3:44 PM



The Wichmann Family sent a Beautiful in Blue to the Bernhardt family.

July 27 at 2:18 PM



The Wichmann Family planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Jay.

July 27 at 2:18 PM



Anonymous sent a Crystal Cross Bouquet to the Bernhardt family.

July 27 at 9:46 AM



Anonymous planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Jay.

July 27 at 9:46 AM





Tribute Wall

Jay G. Bernhardt
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Terry B. planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Jay.



July 27 at 7:40 AM



Terry Berkson posted:

One early fall there was a Dawn Dance at The Pavilion on Goodyear Lake that Jay and I wanted to attend. But he had to play football for Richfield the next day and his mother would never approve of his staying up all night and then playing ball. So, he told her that we were going to the movies and that he would sleep at my Aunt Ruta's house where I was staying. The dance at the lake was great with a seven piece band and lots of partners available. We didn't last long enough to see the sun rise but by the time we got back to Aunt Ruta's it was almost dawn. Later in the day on the football field Jay incredibly made two beautiful shoe-string catches that helped win the game. Terry Berkson

July 27 at 7:28 AM



Anonymous sent a Sweet Tranquility Basket to the Bernhardt family.



July 27 at 6:17 AM



Dave, Jonelle And Delanie Alberici sent a Divine Peace Bouquet to the Bernhardt family.



July 26 at 11:13 AM



Dave, Jonelle And Delanie Alberici planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Jay.



July 26 at 11:13 AM



Tribute Wall

Jay G. Bernhardt
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Anonymous sent a Gracious Lavender Basket to the Bernhardt family.

July 26 at 4:20 AM



Anonymous sent a Magnificent Life Spray to the Bernhardt family.

July 25 at 10:01 AM



Anonymous planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Jay.

July 25 at 10:01 AM



AI

Aiandra lit a candle in honor of Jay.

July 23 at 3:30 PM



JC

John Casadonte posted:

To the entire Bernhardt family, Please accept our deepest sympathy at this time of grief. Our thoughts and prayers are with Jay and all of you. May he rest in peace. John & Shirley Casadonte

July 23 at 11:16 AM



Tribute Wall

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Manuela Capelo Ilgenfritz lit a candle in honor of Jay.

To the Bernard Family, Please accept my deepest and most heartfelt condolences for the loss of your beloved father, grandfather, and loved one. May you find strength in one another during this difficult time and comfort in the many cherished memories he leaves behind. A life of 82 years is a remarkable journey—filled with love, wisdom, and experiences that touched the lives of so many. Though words cannot take away the pain, I hope you feel surrounded by love and supported by those who care for you. Wishing you peace, comfort, and healing in the days ahead. You are all in my thoughts and prayers. With sympathy, Manuela and John Ilgenfritz



July 23 at 8:22 AM



Manuela Capelo Ilgenfritz July 23 at 8:26 AM

Sorry Bernhardt family



Rick Hallock posted:

A friend, a mentor, an all-around good guy, and a loss that transcends that of a favored pet. Rest in peace, my friend. Scenarist condolences to the Bernhardt family. Rick

July 23 at 8:12 AM



David Kornbluth July 26 at 3:11 PM

A Great Guy, always happy, and looking to make a deal with someone, anyone. A brilliant mind that I don't think ever rested. RIP my friend, you will be missed every day.



Anonymous sent a Your Light Shines to the Bernhardt family.



July 23 at 8:09 AM



Anonymous planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Jay.



July 23 at 8:09 AM



Tribute Wall

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Emily Façanha lit a candle in honor of Jay.
Our sincere condolences, Family Façanha.

July 23 at 7:25 AM



Anonymous sent a Heavenly Grace Spray to the Bernhardt family.

July 23 at 5:13 AM



John J. sent a Beautiful in Blue to the Bernhardt family.

July 23 at 3:31 AM



John J. planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Jay.

July 23 at 3:31 AM





Tribute Wall

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Judson Davis posted:

Vitae summa brevis spem nos vetat incohare longam:..they are not long, those days of wine and roses..Out of a misty dream -Our path emerges for awhile, then closesWithin a dream.I had a professional and a personal relationship with Jay and he was a magnificent friend and person. Always had time for you in spite of his magnificent growth of JGB and he always welcomed me with a generous smile and a fantastic outlook on life. He lived his dream! RIP my friend."

July 22 at 3:01 PM



Frank Moreno July 23 at 10:11 AM

I just received word this morning that Jay Bernhardt has sadly passed away! I was so saddened by the news, because Jay was such an active person who shinned every where he went! I had the pleasure of meeting Jay at The Ocean Royale where I work and he lived! Jay was always a pleasant to talk to just about anything but mostly The NY Yankees that we both loved and rooted for! I will also miss our talks about Notre Dame! BOY DID HE LOVE THEM, THE FIGTHING IRISH! JAY I WILL MISS HIM! MY DEEPEST CONDOLENCES TO KATHLEEN HIS LOVELY WIFE AND FAMILY! He will be sorely missed because Jay always stood out wherever he went! May the lord bless him in heaven as he did on earth! My thoughts and prayers 🙏 to the Bernhardt Family! YOU WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED IN SPIRIT! RIP MY FRIEND



God Bless. Fondly, Maryann Keller sent an Ocean Breeze Spray to the Bernhardt family.

July 22 at 2:13 PM



Jonny, Michael, Topher And Sean sent an Ocean Breeze Spray to the Bernhardt family.

July 22 at 11:48 AM





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Sandy Olson posted:

I knew Jay and the whole Bernhardt family both in school at RSCS and later as adults. I moved from the area long ago but Jay and I had several conversations about Richfield Springs and what potential it had to again become "famous". Jay loved his home town and did so many things to improve the quality of life there. The Richfield Springs Mercury was a lifeline of social information and area news. Jay was one of a kind and will be fondly remembered by his many, many friends.

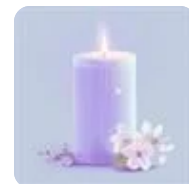
July 22 at 11:01 AM



Linda Quilter lit a candle in honor of Jay.

Sending Love and Sincere Condolences to the Bernhardt Family. God Bless! With Sincere Sympathy,Linda Quilter and Family So Sorry Jason for your Loss!

July 22 at 8:33 AM



Don Strick posted:

Jay was a natural leader who truly cared about his employees and friends. He was a friend to the Dept of Defense and its Service Members, providing quality products with fair and reasonable prices. Even when there were mirror mistakes to shipments that were not his company's fault, Jay would direct the action to take care of his Military customers at company expense. He will be missed by all who had any kind of professional relationship with Jay. My prayer goes out to him and his family. Sincerely, Don Strick

July 22 at 8:09 AM



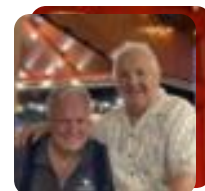
Everyone At The Joe Namath Foundation sent a Loving Lilies and Roses Bouquet to the Bernhardt family.

July 22 at 6:42 AM



Teresa shared 2 photos to the **Through the years** album.

July 21 at 6:17 PM





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Janice Fetterly And Lee posted:

I worked for Jay at JGB for 25+years and became friends with his wife Kathy And his children Erica and Jason Jay was very good to me over the years Condolences to Kath and the kids and his family

July 21 at 1:54 PM



Michael McLaughlin posted:

Thinking of you and your family. Your dad was a great man, and his memory will live on in all who knew him.Mike McLaughlin

July 21 at 1:48 PM



The McLaughlin Family sent a Peaceful White Lilies Basket to the Bernhardt family.



July 21 at 1:45 PM



The McLaughlin Family planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Jay.



July 21 at 1:45 PM



Al & Shelly Polge lit a candle in honor of Jay.

Dear, dear family,We know Jay brought you joy, made you laugh, and showed you love so he has given you the lasting gifts of a beautiful life and blessed your memories forever. Sending our very deepest sympathy.Uncle Al and Aunt Shelly



July 21 at 11:50 AM

MH **Mary Hanagan** July 21 at 2:07 PM

Dear, dear Kathy and children. Jay and I lived on the same street in Richfield Springs growing up. Sometimes we even walked to school together. The last time I saw Jay and Kathy was at the Schuyler Lake wedding venue. I cannot remember the correct name. I did have many conversations with Jay and Kathy that day. I was shocked at Jay's death, really shocked. Also, I loved his parents and Doug. I did not know Bobby. I am sending baskets of love to let you know I and so, so many loved Jay. Much Love, Mary Hanagan



Media

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Thomas J. Pirro Jr. Funeral Home shared a **Tribute Video**.

July 28 at 5:59 AM



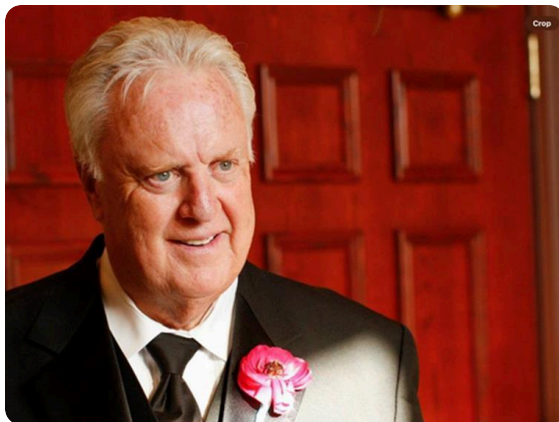
DA Dorothy And Ron Ajemian July 31 at 11:23 AM
Beautiful

AN Ana July 28 at 8:14 AM
Forever in our hearts and prayers! We will love you forever grandpa !



Teresa shared 2 photos to the **Through the years** album.

July 21 at 6:17 PM





Memories only last if you share them

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



Scan to Visit

