

OBITUARIES

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OUR TOWN

John Paul Usibelli

Born July 5, 1964, into three generations of Northern Italian immigrant coal miners, John lived on an active mine claim. Following in his grandfather John Usibelli's footsteps as Usibelli mine manager and his father Roland Usibelli, a Teamster at Usibelli Coal Mine, John, too, started out at the mine as a Teamster and then became a mining engineer mostly working in production. John received his degree from University of Alaska Fairbanks in mining engineering. He was employed at UCM for 33 years. He fondly remembers being hired by Joe Sr. and Joe Jr. in 1982 and he remained employed until his passing.



Usibelli

Growing up in the secluded towns of Suntrana, Usibelli and Healy before the Parks Highway connected Fairbanks to Anchorage, the mining families flew to Fairbanks in the company airplane to get groceries. In the mornings, John would see miners setting off to work every day on foot, as the mine site was within walking distance to the towns. His first job at the mine was as a 9-year-old boy, stoking and cleaning the company coal boilers that heated the families' homes.

An avid basketball fan, John participated in Healy men's basketball, totting his chil-

dren, nieces and nephews along, perfecting his daughter's shot technique. As an MVP basketball star, he was selected to be on the basketball team in the Arctic Winter Games. Most men of his generation remember John's basketball years as him being an unstoppable force on the court, a trait that carried him to his many life accomplishments. John also enjoyed the game of golf. His children recall going to the Healy driving range by Otto Lake with hundreds of balls in the long summer days. He participated in many charitable golf tournaments in Healy as well as a few in Las Vegas.

John served on the Tri-Valley Volunteer Fire Department board, the Healy Hockey Board and participated in all youth sports and activities in the Healy community, starting with Little League baseball, basketball and hockey. John's other hobbies always included taking his family along to go skiing, four-wheeling, camping, fishing, global traveling, hunting, target practicing and grilling. Most dinners were cooked outdoors on the barbecue or bonfire. When the campfire was built and the smoke billowing, many community members and children knew they were welcome to stop by to play, eat, share stories and catch up. Food and fun shared for all.

The property he and his wife, Teresa, built was not only a public business but also served as a warm home for his children and extended family members including grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and

friends, often in chorus. A place to connect and network, the nightly dinner table was a blend of generational family members, traveling guests and friends, always engaged in a lively conversation, ranging from political, social, religious, family and current events.

Together, John and his wife, Teresa, had many successful business ventures, many firsts in the tourism town, including a car rental company, a drive-thru coffee shop, vacation rentals, a bed and breakfast turned long-term rentals, and a U-Haul. Now it's just the long-term rentals, called Alaskan Chateau. John considered doing more in the tourism business in the future, as he enjoyed meeting the people from all over the world who came to the bed and breakfast. In John's short accomplished life, he proudly wore many hats from dad, grandpa, husband, businessman and mining engineer.

John was a man of character who shared his home, fed and clothed others, but most of all he loved. He was instrumental in the shaping of all he came in contact with from children to peers to elderly. He was a very talented, humble man, a working man's man, a well-rounded individual, a role model and a jack of all trades. His selfless give-the-shirt-off-his-back charisma for the well-being and happiness of his wife, children, grandchildren and other family, as well as his many polished skills and hobbies, are going to be impossible to replicate. John's family was the most important thing

to him and the only thing he needed to be as efficacious as he was in life.

John Paul Usibelli passed away Nov. 17, 2015. A memorial mass in honor of John was held Friday, Nov. 7, 2015 at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Cle Elum, Washington.

A vigil was held at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4, and a mass of Christian burial was at 11 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 5, at Sacred Heart Cathedral with Bishop Chad Zielinski presiding in Fairbanks. A reception followed at UAF Wood Center.

John is survived and forever in the hearts of his wife, Teresa Chepoda Usibelli; their children, Vincent Usibelli and Elizabeth Usibelli "Krenzke" and husband Paul, and their children Bethany Marie and Joshua John, and Chepoda and Usibelli families and friends. Donations are welcome in his name to the Greater Fairbanks Community Hospital Foundation in support of J. Michael Carol Cancer Treatment Center or Fairbanks Community Hospice.

Gods greatest commandment is "You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and will all your mind." This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39). John did this and his legacy lives on with those he touched through his selfless giving and gentle soul.

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DEAD HISTORY 2015-39