



Peter J. Brancazio

April 25, 2020

Peter J. Brancazio, age 81 of Flushing, NY, died on April 25, 2020 from complications of COVID-19. He was born in Astoria, Queens on March 22, 1939 to Peter and Ann Brancazio. He attended Stuyvesant High School and went on to NYU to study engineering, and then received his Masters in engineering from Columbia University and his Ph.D. in astrophysics at NYU. He was introduced to Ronnie Kramer of Long Island City at a party in 1957, and they were inseparable for the next 62 years and married for the last 57 of those.

Peter taught physics at Brooklyn College for over 30 years. He made his name first in astrophysics, then as one of the early pioneers of the field of the physics of sports, and then finally in the study of science and religion. He received public attention for his research on the ideal angle for a jump shot and the spin of football passes and punts, and especially for disproving baseball myths such as the rising fastball. For the last several years, he lectured to adult learners at the Hutton House of Long Island University on topics ranging from astronomy to the historical record of the Bible.

Peter was an avid athlete. He was a fixture on the basketball court for years until his knees stopped cooperating, and then took up tennis, which he enjoyed for the rest of his life. He made many lasting friendships among his tennis partners. He shared his love of sports with his sons, spending many

years as a Little League baseball and basketball coach.

Peter had many and varied interests. He had an encyclopedic memory and was a New York Times crossword aficionado. He loved to travel, and with his family visited a great number of national parks. He and Ronnie were regular travelers in retirement, with annual vacations on St. Martin and recent trips to Italy and France. He had a passion for family traditions, particularly making ravioli for Christmas and the Christmas eve anchovy sauce that only he ate. He was interested in all aspects of science and ideas, and rarely passed up an opportunity to debate politics or religion. He was a fan of many styles of music, ranging from rock to folk to opera. He liked to say that his three greatest heroes were Einstein, Mozart, and Bob Dylan. He also became a community activist in retirement; he founded the North East Flushing Civic Association and was tireless in protecting the neighborhood from overzealous developers.

However, Peter's greatest joys came from his life with Ronnie and their family. He and Ronnie spent a lifetime enjoying mutual interests and pursuing new ones, particularly in travel and in the arts. Most importantly, they never ceased to have fun together.

In addition to Ronnie, he is survived by his sons David Brancazio and Larry Brancazio and daughter-in-laws Diane and Dina, and five grandchildren, Nick, Josh, Harris, Nate, and Amelia. His sons remember him as a warm, patient and supportive father who put his family above everything else, who always had time to support their varied hobbies, and who made his love and pride in them abundantly clear. He was exceptionally proud of all of his grandchildren, and took great joy in spending time and talking with each of them.

A memorial service will be planned for a later date. Donations in his memory can be made to the Interfaith Nutrition Network at <https://the-inn.org> or 211

Fulton Avenue, Hempstead, NY 11550.

Tribute Wall



“ *Peter J. Brancazio*

November 16, 2022 at 07:31 PM



“ *I just googled Peter today and learned of his obit. I had followed Peter for a few years but never got to calling him.*

Peter was a close friend of mine in the 50's and 60's when we both lived at 34-20-30th Street in Astoria. Peter and our friends were all one year older than me. We played all manner of sports on the sidewalk and street in front of our apartment. Mutual friends included Eugene Willett, Larry Anderson, Kenneth Garner, Christian Prestholm and Renato Bardone. I knew he became a professor and watched a video of him giving a talk on being an atheist. I graduated with a masters degree in Mechanical Engineering and an Army commission. I retired as an engineering manager from Pratt & Whitney Aircraft in East Hartford, Connecticut with 38 years.

If interested, my email address is carolyndm@aol.com.

Herb Asplund

Herb Asplund - August 01, 2021 at 03:48 PM



“ *Deepest, if belated, condolences to the Brancazio family.*

Michael Shannon - October 09, 2020 at 11:06 AM

AB

“ When I joined the Brooklyn College Physics Department in 1970, Pete, who had been there for some seven years, became one of my first friends. In large part, this was because we discovered early on that we shared an unusual enthusiasm for teaching physics to non-science undergraduates, something most of our fellow faculty members avoided like root canal. Since I had almost no teaching experience, it was only natural that Pete became a mentor to me (though he would have laughed at the title) in those early years when I was still stumbling my way around the classroom.

Pete had a knack for finding ways to get important concepts across to students for whom mathematics was a foreign language. I tried mightily to emulate him. I sat in on his lectures whenever I could, and stole material from him shamelessly. What I could never quite imitate was his gentle sense of humor and his way of inviting students to share his sense of fun about physics. (Fun? Physics? You must be kidding.)

Pete and I remained friends for the 27 years that we were in the Department together. We often visited in each other's offices, rambling on together about subjects ranging from cosmology to interpretations of quantum mechanics to new ways of presenting tricky concepts to students. He always shared his ideas about these things with unabashed enthusiasm, and always with that signature sense of fun.

That's what I will remember most about him: That unique sense of fun. That, for me, was Pete's special magic.

Al Bond
Professor Emeritus

Albert Bond - May 30, 2020 at 02:19 PM

PL

“ I did not learn until yesterday that Peter Brancazio had died back in April from complications due to the novel coronavirus. I am stunned and deeply saddened that such a vibrant and remarkable person has been taken from us. Pete was an important influence in my professional life from the time that I joined the faculty at Brooklyn College in 1973. He was my model for how to go about teaching students who were afraid of science, especially physics, but could be won over with the right approach. Pete was a master at making science more approachable and throughout his career at Brooklyn College, he remained the person in the physics department who was most effective in reaching the large population of non-science majors who were taking courses that were supposed to be tailored to their needs and interests but did not always succeed. His warmth and humor, coupled with a relaxed teaching style and a talent for explaining difficult concepts, convinced many, if not most, of his students that a physics course could be enjoyable and interesting. That was very important outcome in a department that often had a somewhat tenuous relationship with non-science majors. When it came time for Pete to retire, at which time I was serving as department chairperson, I was acutely aware of the loss that the department would be suffering. He was irreplaceable. I know that Ronnie and the other family members are now feeling a much greater and more profound loss. I can only offer condolences. Peter Brancazio cannot be replaced but he will most certainly remain in our memories.

*Peter Lesser
Professor Emeritus*

Peter Lesser - May 29, 2020 at 08:16 PM

“ Dear Brancazio family:

It's with great sadness that I learned about Peter's passing. I came to Brooklyn College in 1977 as Dean of Science and a faculty member in the Physics department. It was clear to me and others at Brooklyn that Peter was an exceptional teacher with clear interesting lectures and a good sense of humor.

I was also interested in the science of sports and learned a great deal for Peter.

In the 1990s Peter and I were principal investigators on a major National Science Foundation grant to enable junior high school teachers to use sports to teach science. We developed a hands-on program which held classes on Saturdays in the gym at Brooklyn. It was a pleasure to work with Peter as he infused the program using his exceptional knowledge of both science and sports. The program was a great success and empowered many NYC junior high school teachers. The results of the NSF grant were presented to other teachers at meetings of the American Association of Physics teachers.

When invited to speak at NASA, Peter also a fun lecture on Sports on the Moon. When I was at the Graduate Center, I invited Peter to give a special talk to the public on his Sports on the Moon. The talk was very well attended and was covered in a full column in the New York Times.

Peter kept in good shape playing basketball. He once told me his secret formula for playing as he got older. (The secret was Advil before and after playing.)

Peter retire relatively early and the Department I missed his outgoing personality and his great teaching.

Brian Schwartz

Brian Schwartz - May 26, 2020 at 01:24 AM

MN

“ *All members of Department of Physics at Brooklyn College were deeply saddened by Professor Peter J. Brancazio's passing. Many of faculty worked together with him. He was phenomenal professor and well know for his work on the Physics of Sports. We would like to express our deepest condolence to family members and pray for rest in peace of the depart soul.
In the last department meeting, we observed a moment of silence in his memory.*

*Mim Nakarmi
Chair
Department of Physics
Brooklyn College*

Mim Nakarmi - May 21, 2020 at 10:59 AM

JJ

“ *I was one of Professor Brancazio's student's at Brooklyn College in the 1980's. I was saddened when I read his obituary in the New York Times this morning. Professor Brancazio was a very dedicated educator, an avid sports enthusiast, and a very nice man. I looked forward to his lectures, his witty anecdote's, and his UFO stories. "Undoubtedly flipped out" was his definition for UFO. Thank you for your time on this planet, and may your trip to the outer world be peaceful. James Rotunno jr.*

James Rotunno jr - May 20, 2020 at 06:30 PM

JE

“ I played basketball for years with Pete in sysoset. He was a good outside shooter. Of course his nickname was Pistol Pete. He did have a lot of theories about jumping and the curve ball. My condolences to his family. Jeff and all his basket buddies.

jeff - May 20, 2020 at 06:10 PM

PS

“ I was fortunate to be in one of Mr. Brancazio's classes in Brooklyn College; I believe that it was called Survey of the Universe. I will always remember him as a warm, funny, and fine teacher who could make complex things understandable. I am so sorry to hear of his passing.

Pat P. Silva - May 20, 2020 at 11:14 AM

AG

“ hi,

i attended an astronomy course given by professor brancazio at brooklyn college in the late 1960s. there are very few instructors names that i can remember from those days. i will tell you that he was my favorite instructor in all four years that i spent there. i still tell one his jokes to my friends. it went something like this:

a russian, american and italian are discussing their countries space programs.

the russian says 'We're planning to send a man to Mars', the american says, 'We're sending a man to Venus', the italian says 'That's nothing - we're sending a man to the sun!'

the others look at him and say that's impossible.

and the the professor went into his italian accent as the italian responded:

at's all right, we gonna send him at night!!!

i saw the obituary in the NY Times. my condolences to you all

aaron gurtman

aaron gurtman - May 20, 2020 at 10:38 AM

BG

“ He was my astronomy professor at Brooklyn College in the early 1960s. When asked during the heyday of Soviet Union fear whether he agreed with the use of the bomb shelters beneath the college, he said “if the sirens went off I would stand in the middle of the quadrangle and watch the bombs fall. Who would want to survive a nuclear war?” He was a refreshing teacher and an inspiration in the classroom.

Benn Greenspan - May 18, 2020 at 11:31 AM

LD

“ I attended Brooklyn College from 1975-1979. I loved science although I didn't have a particular aptitude for it because of my difficulty with math, so I took the basic introductory science courses in the subjects I loved. That included two astronomy courses taught by Professor Brancazio. What a joy to be in his class. What a wonderful teacher who excelled at explaining complicated concepts in a way everyone could understand. And what a funny, kind person. I was sick during the semester and missed an astronomy exam and was terribly worried about it. To my surprise, one day when I was still home sick, the phone rang . It was Professor Brancazio, telling me not to worry about missing the exam; the only thing that was important was that I feel better and when I was ready I could take a makeup. I was so sad to learn of his death today. He was a great educator, lovely person and unforgettable.

Liane Daniels - May 16, 2020 at 09:23 PM

IS

Liane, I attended Brooklyn College from 1976 to 1980 and also took Professor Brancazio's two astronomy classes with similar sentiments. At this distance they are one of the few experiences where I can easily recall the unadulterated joy and excitement of learning.

Irwin Seltzer - August 24, 2020 at 02:08 AM

NR

“ *It was with sadness that I recently received notification of your husband and our valued alumnus Peter J. Brancazio's passing. I am writing to extend my deepest sympathy on behalf of the New York University Tandon School of Engineering and the Polytechnic Alumni Association.*

He will be missed by all those whose lives he touched. Again, please accept my condolences to you and your family during this difficult time.

Sincerely,
Jelena Kovacevic
William R. Berkley Professor and Dean at NYU Tandon School of Engineering

NYU Tandon Alumni Relations - May 14, 2020 at 06:46 PM

RM

“ *Dear Ronnie*

The last thing that I remember Peter saying to me was " You are 2 weeks older than me"

I laughed because I thought he was actually older and much wiser than I . We both

laughed at the "one" truth anyway birthdays in March.

MY sincerest and sad condolences to you Ronnie and the entire family.

Ruth Mainer - May 05, 2020 at 11:22 AM

AM

“Pete and I met in 1964 as faculty members at Brooklyn College. We were close from the start, despite his unrequited New York Mets support and, according to Pete, my misplaced Yankee bias. Pete, a brilliant physicist, was also an extraordinary teacher, vibrant and dynamic. He earned recognition as Brooklyn College Professor of the Year. His innovative classes on science and religion were always oversubscribed, drawing on and enhanced by the diversity of our student body. Pete’s influence on the College was profound. Karen and I have cherished our times with Pete and Ronnie for six decades. One of the best parts of me has been my friendship with Peter Brancazio.

Arnie Markoe

Arnie Markoe - May 02, 2020 at 09:36 PM

RS

“I considered Peter one of my closest friends. I will miss him as we all will.
My sincere condolence to you Ronnie and the rest of your family.
With deepest regrets,
Ron and Alida Sherman

Ronald Sherman - May 02, 2020 at 06:38 PM

EL

“ With a heavy heart I give my sincere condolences to my cousin's. Ronnie, David and Larry. Losing my cousin Peter actually chipped away a part of my own life, as Peter was always there since the day I was born and we had such a wonderful connection to our grandparents. I will miss him tremendously, and I will grieve along with his wonderful family, whom I admired my entire life. Rest in peace Peter.
Love,
Eleanor

Eleanor Levito - May 02, 2020 at 04:49 PM

BA

“ My heart goes out to Ronnie, David, Larry and his beloved grandchildren. I am at a loss for words of comfort to offer. Peter was a loving husband, father, grandfather, close friend, gifted teacher and a consummate "renaissance man". He was a dedicated "wordsmith," and I will always treasure the many conversations we had about the Greek language and his love of Greek folk music. The words of American historian Henry Adams, come to mind, "A teacher affects eternity..." Rest in peace dear friend.

Barbara Aliprantis - May 02, 2020 at 01:48 PM

TL

“ CLIFF AND I REMEMBER FONDLY OUR- ONCE- A- YEAR VISIT-- MARKOS' NEW YEARS EVE PARTY, WHEN HE WOULD DISCUSS TRAVEL WITH CLIFF AND PASTA/PUGLIA WITH ME.

HE WILL BE MISSED.

TONY AND CLIFF

Tony LaCava - May 02, 2020 at 11:48 AM

MG

“ Dear Ronnie and family, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to meet Peter and to share some conversations with him even if some of them were only over the telephone. Sincere condolences to all. Mae Gabrielides

Mae Gabrielides - May 02, 2020 at 10:57 AM

LM

“ Pete was a gifted person. I know how much he knew about a vast variety of subjects. But I will remember him most for his warmth and humor, and for the happiness he brought to my family just by being him.

All the Markoes deeply mourn him.

Sincerely,

Lauren

Lauren Markoe - May 02, 2020 at 08:08 AM

AM

“ Ronnie, David, Larry, Dinah, Diane, Nicholas, Joshua, Harris:

During the last visit to Ron and Pete, he was kind enough to take down some old family albums and share with Noel and me some pictures of my family. It was a lovely thing to do. Then again, it should be no surprise. He was a man who embraced family life. I've seen Peter beam with pride at Larry's Ph.D. party, talk to David about his projects, and enjoy music with Ronnie and reminisce about the many trips that he and Ronnie took together.

It doesn't get better than that. What a wonderful life, and yes, it ended too soon.

I am so sorry, but am very pleased that all of YOU are still on the planet!

*Love
Amy*

Amy - May 02, 2020 at 05:53 AM

BP

“ Dear Ronnie & Family,
I am so very sorry for your loss & heartbroken over the loss of a found cousin. Peter found our Brancazio connection through his Ancestry research several years ago. After many attempts, I am grateful for having the pleasure of meeting both Peter and Ronnie at their home this past January and sharing a wonderful evening; we ate and talked for hours! We had made plans of getting together again Easter weekend so he & Ronnie could teach me how to make a family recipe, Pizza Rustica, but it was not meant to be. I enjoyed all his stories of our ancestors and his travels to Gallo Matese in search for Brancazio's. I will miss our phone calls, comparing of family information and excitement of new information. He will truly be missed.

Always, Bernadette

Bernadette Princiotta - May 01, 2020 at 06:00 PM

HO

“ Dear Ronnie and familia,
I am deeply sorry and totally devastated to hear of Peter's passing. He and I enjoyed so much time researching his family history over these past few years and sharing the roots of Gallo Matese. Peter was so excited to attend the Gallesi picnic with you and meet cousin Elisa there. His peasani at matese pizza will surely miss his visits. I will miss our conversations. I am so happy you and Peter enjoyed all the travel over the past few years. Life is too short and we never know, however this time is more trying than any other. Always, Holly

Holly - May 01, 2020 at 02:06 PM

BJ

“ Ken and I are heartbroken. At the same time, we are filled with deepest gratitude for the privilege of knowing Peter and recognizing the remarkable individual he was—a scholar and a gentleman. Our admiration of his brilliant mind, his wide-range of interests, his meticulous research, his strong work ethic, his fluid writing style, his devotion to the love of his life Ronnie and to his family and his friends is easy to understand by all who had the good fortune to be in his presence. He gave so much; he left us with so much. We will always hold him in our hearts and minds, grateful for his life and the joy and learnings he brought us.

Barbara Jackson

Barbara Jackson - May 01, 2020 at 11:47 AM