



## John "Jack" J. Cenna III

November 22, 1950 - December 6, 2025

John "Jack" Joseph Cenna III, age 75, passed away on December 6, 2025. Born on November 22, 1950, Jack grew up in Pennsylvania and graduated from Penn Hills High School in 1968.

Jack discovered his passion for percussion at a young age, beginning his early studies with Eugene "Babe" Fabrizi. His dedication and remarkable talent led him to study with some of the most respected teachers in the field, including John Beck at the Eastman School of Music, Jerry Carlos at the Curtis Institute of Music, and Stanley Leonard privately at Carnegie Mellon University.

Jack's professional musical journey began in Pittsburgh, where he performed with Dave Stock and the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, performed for the Pittsburgh Symphony as first call extra percussionist for four seasons, and served for many years as the percussionist at the Holiday House in Monroeville playing with Randy Purcell. During his time in Pittsburgh, Jack was also the director of percussion studies at the University of Pittsburgh, all the while playing commercial music as a freelancer, specializing in drums. He was also a proud member of the Percussive Arts Society and the Pittsburgh Jazz Society. His life and career were greatly influenced by a long list of Pittsburgh based artists like Jack Purcell, Joe Negri, Frank Ostrowski, Ernie Matteo, Don Aliquo, Mary Lou Haugh, John Costa, Bobby Negri, Sandy Staley, Lenny Rogers, Randy Purcell, Bobby Boswell, Harold Betters, and John Wilson.

He later moved to Las Vegas, where he worked under Frank Sinatra's acclaimed bandleader, Vinnie Falcone. During his career, Jack performed with world-renowned entertainers such as Steve and Edyie Gormé, Pia Zadora, Cher, Dolly Parton, Wayne Newton, Sammy Davis Jr., and Don Rickles, among many others. His final Las Vegas performance was Sinatra: The Man and the Music.

Before retiring, Jack founded Tradewinds, a joyful and energetic steel drum band. He also performed in a marimba quartet and shared his love of music through teaching and craftsmanship. Jack was the owner of Kinder Mallets and a proud member of the American Federation of Musicians.

Jack is survived by his mother, Ila Cavanaugh; his sister, Dawn Douds; his former wife, Gini Cenna; his partner, Pamela Gordon; nephew, Justin (Mary) Douds; niece, Courtney (Matt) Douds; great nieces Juniper Fox, and Iris Douds; and great nephew, Garland Fox. He was preceded in death by his father, John J. Cenna Sr.

Jack will be remembered for his extraordinary musical prowess, his warmth, his dedication to his work, and the joy he brought to every stage he touched. Visitation will be held on Friday, December 12th from 12 PM to the time of a service at 2 PM at D'Alessandro Funeral Home & Crematory, Ltd., Butler and 46th sts., Lawreceville.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the St. Margaret Hospital ICU.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

DEC 12. 12:00 PM.

D'Alessandro Funeral Home & Crematory

# Tribute Wall

DR

“ Jack was the most talented musical guy I have ever known. Jack and I met in 7th grade at Seneca Junior High. He was always the coolest guy in the class. Rest in Peace Jack ... the heavens now have lots of rhythm and a really special cool nice guy.

*Don Rhule*

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**Don Rhule** - December 19, 2025 at 08:24 PM

JC

“ So sorry to hear of Jack's passing but he is with the Lord. Hugs to Ila, Dawn and family. He was definitely a talented musician.

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**Jocelyn Cenna** - December 08, 2025 at 06:29 PM