



JOSEPH IGNATIUS

Class of 1973

Joseph Ignatius was an accomplished retired civil servant whose service at the Department of Defense (DoD) United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Baltimore District lasted 39 years, ending in January 2017.

The son of the late Joseph and Mary Ann Ignatius, he was siblings to Judy, EF Class of 67; Mary Jo, EF '69 and 2017 Educator Recognition Award recipient, and Vince, EF '77. To the envy of his older siblings, he was the first Ignatius to go through the entire Elizabeth Forward public school system. While at EF, he was a trumpet player in the marching band and was the captain of the Jr. High Quiz Team, appearing on KDKA. He graduated with High Honors in 1973.

Following graduation, Ignatius made the tough choice to move away from home to attend The Pennsylvania State University in State College, PA. He quickly made lifelong friends and met eventual coworkers while there. Between summers, he worked as a painter at EF High School. In 1977, he received his Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering, also with High Honors. His love for Penn State lives on with his son, Joseph Ignatius, III, who graduated there in 2016.

While waiting to find employment in a tough job market, Ignatius returned home the summer of 1977 and worked at Marraccini's. He received multiple job opportunities away from home, including one for the Navy in Philadelphia. He looked south to Baltimore, where the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was hiring young interns into the Junior Engineer Training (JET) Program. His career in public service began there on January 9, 1978. This program allowed recent graduates to get firsthand training with ongoing construction projects, experience at a military base and an eight-month rotation program where interns go through all the branches within the Operations Division.

During this exciting time, Ignatius spent a summer in southern Garrett County, MD to oversee the construction of a major flood management project near the headwaters of the Potomac River now called Jennings Randolph Lake. He then went to Aberdeen Proving Grounds (APG) for the next four months, before finally going to Baltimore for his rotational period. He chose to go into the Hydraulics path where he could use his civil engineering degree. Here, Ignatius was charged with calculating flood control dam hydraulic charts, creating reservoir regulation manuals and calculating flood releases within the projects of the Potomac and Susquehanna River Basins.

Ignatius remained in that role until 1991, when he changed his title to Civil Engineer, moving within the Project Operations Branch. In this role he oversaw existing projects within the Baltimore District, which extended as far north as Southern New York State, as far west as Garrett County, MD, and through Central Pennsylvania, including Raystown Lake, Cowanesque Lake and Foster Joseph Sayers Dam. During this time, Joe assisted in the management of daily operations of the projects, whose missions included construction and operation of dams that support life and property safety and providing recreation, environmental stewardship and water supply; water resources technical services, and construction of local flood risk management projects. He was project manager overseeing the construction of several Visitor Centers at Raystown and Tioga Hammond Lake.

In August 1990, Ignatius married the love of his life, Linda Adams, and they had a son, Joseph, in 1993. Both public servants, they worked tirelessly during the day, but in the evenings, the couple could not wait to come home to spend time with their son. They made a beautiful home together in Sykesville, MD. Tragically, Linda and their newborn son, Benjamin, passed away suddenly in 1996. His family, friends, coworkers and community got him through this tough time. Still a hardworking and wonderful father, he made things work as a single father to raise a smart, caring young man. Ignatius would introduce his son to the facets of his remarkable job, tour the District's Projects and get to know the people who worked there. This would later influence his son's decision to be a landscape architect and even intern at the USACE.

Ignatius helped get the Baltimore District through several crises, including after 9/11. He has tasked with going to New York City to deliver vital communication tools to the NY District Office in Brooklyn and to assist in the Planning and Response Teams in the recovery efforts. Also during Hurricane Isabel in 2003, he worked tirelessly to work with the Emergency Operations to address the ongoing needs of the Flood Control projects affected by the storm. His expertise ensured that minimal damage occurred to the flood control structures and the downstream communities. USACE estimates that the projects across the Baltimore District have prevented more than \$16 Billion in flood damages since their completion.

In 2009, Ignatius advanced to the rank of Chief of Flood Risk Management Branch within the Operations Division, responsible for supervising 30+ projects. This was the pinnacle of his career that he thrived in and loved. Working with so many great people from the rangers, dam operators, engineers, project staff and the District Commanders, he oversaw over a hundred staff across the District and was the decision maker to hire key staff to these projects. He enjoyed his seasonal trips to all the projects, including taking the District Commanders on briefing tours to educate them on what the projects do for the community and the District Mission. Ignatius was a people person and one to listen to the needs the staff had to complete their missions. He was responsible for formulating budgets to send to Congress for the operational needs of the District, often working with Senate and Congressional House Members to ensure funding for these important projects. Throughout his distinguished career, he amassed numerous prestigious awards including the Bronze Order de Fleury Medal and the Commander Award for Civilian Service, the highest honor for a civilian employee.

Ignatius' retirement, though short, was fully taken advantage of, with his dedication of service to his community, church and his family. He rekindled many friendships back from the Elizabeth days, including with his best friend and high school classmate, Gary Miller. He was able to travel extensively including visiting many of his former projects, travelling to the UK and Italy with his son and attending the Masters. His final trip was to the British Open, where he passed away on July 20, 2023, completing his bucket list. Though he moved away from Elizabeth, he kept up with the community, visiting family, planning the Class of 1973's 45th and 50th reunions and giving back after the devastating fire in 2023 by donating his own trumpet he used during his EF days. His devotion to service and spirit of giving will live on within the Warrior community.