



## Angel M. Diez

December 4, 1945 - January 26, 2022

On January 26, Angel Diez, 76, passed away after more than 5 years of a knock-down-drag-out fight against cancer. Angel was born on December 4, 1945 in Havana, Cuba to Angel and Engracia Diez. At the young age of 15 he and his brother, Alberto, were part of the "Pedro Pan Operation" and left Fidel Castro's communist Cuba together in search of--what their parents hoped--was a safer and better life in America. Leaving behind his parents and home must have been incredibly hard. However, it helped contribute to Angel's life-long attitude of accepting things for exactly what they were with a no-nonsense attitude and carrying on with his well-known drive, efficiency and focus. The young boys luckily found a new home in Spokane, Washington. Getting off the plane in June was the coldest the two teens had ever been! The Diez brothers were brought into a loving and wonderful foster family with the Gillespie's. Angel attended Gonzaga University where he met his future bride, Kathy, and was very involved in soccer and baseball. Throughout their 53 years of marriage Angel and Kathy have remained forever bonded to the university and have enjoyed the iconic rise of the Zags basketball team, frequently traveling to games and WCC tournaments. Angel went on to get an MBA from the University of Washington. Angel and Kathy married in 1968 and moved to Vancouver, Washington where they made their home and raised a daughter (Kristin) and son (Matt).

Angel was a leader in the pulp and paper industry during a career spanning over 40 years with many different companies. He was highly admired and

respected by associates and easily made friends with colleagues from around the world. In spite of his worldly travels for business, he always made time for people & activities that were important to him, namely family, friends and sports. Angel was a dedicated family man. His children knew without a doubt that he would be present at any event that they deemed important (even if it wasn't) and would always be there to support them. Looking back, it was amazing that he was able to design his successful work life to fit so seamlessly with his involved family life. He enjoyed watching, playing and coaching sports.

Angel made a name for himself playing in the Portland soccer community for DECADES with St. Pat's SC, Pierre's SC and the Mojors. He truly was an inspiration to any devoted soccer player as he remained fit, played into his 70's and through various knee surgeries. When he injured his wrist (in his 50's) and was advised to stop playing he questioned his doctor and asked for his rationale considering a person doesn't need their arm to play soccer. He had a commitment to youth in his community and coached little league sports in Vancouver even before the birth of his children. As his kids grew he spent thousands of hours developing their skills, attending games, and coaching their teams. During his rough Chemo schedule, it was still a priority for him to watch his adult daughter play in her slow pitch softball league and give her pointers. He even attended his oldest grandson's practices (not just games) for his very first soccer team. In fact, it was impossible for him to stop coaching and as recently as December he was at the local park teaching basketball skills to both of his grandsons. Angel's guidance and coaching, and not just in the field of sports, has had a positive impact on the lives of so many people.

Angel is survived by his wife, Kathy; daughter, Kristin (Josh); grandsons, Cayden and Finn; brother Alberto (Shannon); as well as cousins, nieces, nephews, additional relatives and many friends. Angel was preceded in death by his son, Matt and parents, Angel and Engracia Diez.

All are invited to attend Angel's funeral Mass on Feb. 24, 2022 at 11 am at St.

Joseph's Church 400 S Andresen Rd. Vancouver, WA 98661. The service can also be viewed at: [www.facebook.com/stjoevan](http://www.facebook.com/stjoevan) or [www.youtube.com/stjoevan](http://www.youtube.com/stjoevan).

A graveside service for immediate family will follow at Evergreen Memorial Gardens 1101 NE 112th Ave Vancouver, WA 98684. All are invited to a Celebration of Life reception at the Artillery Barracks 600 Hatheway Rd Vancouver, WA 98661 from 1-4.

Please consider a donation in Angel's memory to: Brenden-Colson Center for Pancreatic Care at Oregon Health & Science University 2730 S Moody Ave, CL4RS

Portland, OR 97201 or to the Gonzaga University scholarship fund.

Please share a memory at [www.columbian.com/obits](http://www.columbian.com/obits) or at [www.evergreenmemorialgardens.com](http://www.evergreenmemorialgardens.com)

# Tribute Wall

JG

“ I met Angel and his brother Alberto when I was four and they graced our lives as long-term foster brothers. I had my party dress on and Angel bowed and I curtsied and shook his hand when we met. He was my favorite, ever, teenager! He loved "Cherie-Baby" and he kept his 1/2 shared, stealth bought car across the park from where we lived, so he could "get away" undetected. He married his princess, Kathy, and adored his children and it always showed! And that foot of his always swung nervously under the table, because he wanted to get up and play soccer, always! Angel was cosmopolitan, a polished businessman, but by nature. Angel was kind, genuine, generous and uplifting of everyone I ever saw him with, over the 61 years that I knew him. He was close to my sisters and parents always, and I watched him embrace his son-in-law, Josh, Matt's friends and others...there was always room for more in his heart. This man made the world a better place for everyone, everyday...that's just who he was. I know his heart and it is more accommodating than the sky is big. I will miss you brother and I am blessed to have shared the earth with you! Saying Angel was a good man is a huge understatement...he was the best! Love Little Sis, Janet Gillespie

---

**Janet Gillespie** - February 24, 2022 at 12:00 AM

BR

“ I only new Angel as a teammate. He was an inspiration not only in his game play but as a kind human that was always pleasant to be with. He'll be remembered kindly.

---

**BR** - February 24, 2022 at 12:00 AM

SI

“ My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family.

---

**Sam Imperati** - February 23, 2022 at 12:00 AM

NS

“ Angel and Alberto would probably not remember me. I so well remember when the Cuban kids arrived in Spokane. I grew up in the Gonzaga neighborhood and met the kids when they were staying at Bishop White Seminary. Angel is included in 2 photos I have of a group of boys taken at Priest Lake in August of 1962. It was so much getting to know the kids. Nancy Hall Schulz

---

**Nancy Schulz** - February 22, 2022 at 12:00 AM

KT

“ Kathy & family, I was shocked to hear of Angel's passing. As you know, I worked with Angel for 15 years and have many fond memories of those years. I sadly lost contact of him several years ago. My prayers go out to you and the family. May the Lord be with you giving you comfort that he is no longer in pain. Much love to you. Karla Tacker

---

**Karla Tacker** - February 22, 2022 at 12:00 AM

BF

“ We are very sad to hear of Angel's passing and his long struggle with pancreatic cancer. Our sincere condolences to you, Kathy and your family. Angel's life story should be made a best seller from escaping communism in Cuba to becoming a college graduate and a highly successful family and businessman. Angel and I were great friends at Gonzaga and shortly after, when we shared our coaching and playing experiences. Being such a great salesman even in college where he was a marketing & business major, he still wasn't able to convince me to become one or join his college soccer team; ironically a few years after graduation, thinking back to Angel's urging, I began a 30 year soccer coaching career and learned to love the game as he did. Angel coached our intramural basketball team called the Knotty Birgens and led us to the intramural championship. Also, We both coached youth basketball teams after graduation, I in Spokane and Angel in Vancouver and had a great experience trading homes and home court with the kids. Whenever we did get together it was always 1 v1 in the driveway, and it was always close although Angel might convince you he won most often. So many fond memories. We will miss him dearly. Brian and Margie Flannigan

---

**Brian Flannigan** - February 20, 2022 at 12:00 AM

JM

“ Kathy and family, so sorry for your loss. Just remember all the good times you had together. Angel will always be there in your hearts.

---

**Judy Mathews** - February 19, 2022 at 12:00 AM

KS

“ Kathy I am so sorry! I know Angel loved you dearly and remember you sharing all your fun times together. Cherish your memories!

---

**Karla Schlosser** - February 18, 2022 at 12:00 AM

LS

“ Wayne and I send you love and light at this difficult time. Wonderful memories will sustain you and keep you strong. Linda & Wayne Saunders

---

**Linda & Wayne Saunders** - February 18, 2022 at 12:00 AM

ME

“ We will miss our dear Gonzaga college friend, Angel, and our dear bridge buddy. You certainly lived a full beautiful life always smiling even while going through treatment. Please say a good word for the rest of us in heaven before you organize your competitive soccer team. RIP Angel Diez. Marty and Annette Erickson

---

**Marty and Annette Erickson** - February 18, 2022 at 12:00 AM

TS

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



---

**Tribute Store** - February 17, 2022 at 12:00 AM

TS

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



---

**Tribute Store** - February 12, 2022 at 12:00 AM

TS

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



-----  
**Tribute Store** - February 12, 2022 at 12:00 AM

TS

“ Angel M. Diez

-----  
**Tribute Store** - February 12, 2022 at 12:00 AM

KL

“ I am thankful to have met Angel and cannot think of him without picturing that beautiful smile! You are in our prayers, dear friend.

-----  
**Karen Leary** - February 12, 2022 at 12:00 AM

KD

“ Thank you so much for your prayers, Scott.

-----  
**Kathy Diez** - February 08, 2022 at 12:00 AM

KD

“ Thank you so much Joan. 💕💕

-----  
**Kathy Diez** - February 07, 2022 at 12:00 AM

ST

“ Mrs.Diez, so sorry for your loss.Prayers for you and your family...

-----  
**Scott Taylor** - February 07, 2022 at 12:00 AM

JP

“ Kathy, my deepest sympathies for your loss. I am praying for peace for you and your family.

Joan Pecora - February 06, 2022 at 12:00 AM

AC

“ Kathy, sorry for your loss. Praying for you and your family.

Ana Coronado - February 03, 2022 at 12:00 AM

KA

“ I will miss you always. You are with me in my heart. Until we meet again, my love.

Kathy - February 03, 2022 at 12:00 AM

KD

“ Thank you Ana.

Kathy Diez - February 03, 2022 at 12:00 AM

KD

“ Thank you for your prayers Ana

Kathy Diez - February 03, 2022 at 12:00 AM

AC

“ Ana Coronado lit a candle in memory of Angel M. Diez



Ana Coronado - February 03, 2022 at 12:00 AM

KD

“ Thank you Mary. Angel fought cancer for over 5 years and his body was tired and needed to be in a better place. He died peacefully at home. Kathy

---

**Kathy Diez** - February 02, 2022 at 12:00 AM

MA

“ Kathy and Family, So sorry to hear of your loss. My prayers are with you and your family. Mary Anderson

---

**Mary Anderson** - February 01, 2022 at 12:00 AM

AD

“ We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ Evergreen Memorial Gardens Cemetery, Funeral Chapel and Crematory

---

**A Memorial Tree was planted for Angel M. Diez** - January 28, 2022 at 12:00 AM