



Anthony J Gurdak Jr.

August 28, 1937 - May 21, 2026

Anthony John “Tony” Gurdak Jr., 88, of Villa Park, Illinois, passed away peacefully surrounded by family on Thursday, May 21, 2026, in Ocala, Florida.

Tony was born on August 28, 1937, in Chicago, Illinois, to Anthony Gurdak Sr. and Irene (Augustyn) Gurdak into a proud Polish American family. He graduated from Holy Trinity High School before earning his associate degree and playing football at Wright Junior College. He built a successful career in the food and beverage industry, beginning at Canada Dry in Chicago and eventually retiring as a Distribution Manager for Miller Brewing Company. Yet his true passion was always sports. At a young age, he became an official for football, basketball, volleyball, baseball, and softball at the youth, high school, and collegiate levels, a role he proudly continued well into his 80s.

Tony dedicated countless hours to serving the Villa Park community he loved. He served two consecutive terms as Treasurer and President of the District 88 School Board and was named Illinois State Board of Education Person of the Year in 1985 for leading the effort to revive interscholastic sports in District 45. He was also an active member of the Illinois High School Association, Holy Trinity High School Alumni Association, Lions Club, and Safari Club International.

To know Tony was to know his fierce love of sports, competition, and

adventure. As a young boy, he loved to climb over the wall at Wrigley Field with friends just to watch the Cubs play. It's a story that perfectly captured his spirited approach to life. Baseball sparked a lifelong love for softball, which he played competitively for decades with teams in Villa Park, Stone Creek, Ocala, FL and senior leagues throughout the country until 2024. Tony proudly wore his Senior Softball World Championship ring and rarely missed an opportunity to share the stories behind it. He also took great pride in being a Senior Olympian.

Beyond sports, Tony was an avid outdoorsman who loved hunting and fishing with family and friends. Whether hunting in the foothills of Montana, in the fields of Illinois, or fishing in his beloved Door County, Wisconsin, Tony was always planning his next adventure or telling stories about the last one. He truly lived life to the fullest.

Tony was tenacious, resilient, and impossible to ignore when he walked into a room. He was a true grinder — someone who worked hard, helped others freely, and never backed down from a challenge. He believed in showing up, doing the work, and taking care of the people around him. If you needed help, Tony was your guy, and if he couldn't get something done himself, he always knew someone who could. His generosity, determination, and larger-than-life presence will be remembered by all who knew and loved him.

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart.” — Colossians 3:23

Tony is survived by his loving wife of 58 years, Carole; his five children, Janice (Andrew), Donald (Pamela), Cynthia (John), Jennifer (Marc), and Tracy (Landon); his 16 beloved grandchildren Anthony, Sara, Christa, Lauren, Joshua, William, Paul, Elizabeth, Zachary, Tyler, Nathaniel, Madison, Jacob, Camden, Emory, Peyton; and 14 cherished great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents; his siblings, Adrienne and Martin; and his

son-in-law, John Kolberg.

A memorial service and celebration of life will be held on Saturday, July 18, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. at Saint Adalbert Catholic Cemetery, 6800 N. Milwaukee Ave., Niles, Illinois 60714. Rev. Bill Orris, a longtime friend and fellow official, will officiate the service. Family and friends are asked to meet at the main office before proceeding together to the chapel. A luncheon celebration will follow the service.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be dedicated in Tony's memory to the American Cancer Society. Tony was a prostate cancer survivor in 1999 and courageously battled metastatic kidney cancer following his diagnosis in September 2024. www.cancer.org

Upcoming Events

Celebration of Life Memorial Service

JUL 18. 11:00 AM (CT)

Saint Adalbert Catholic Cemetery
6800 N Milwaukee Ave
Niles, IL 60714

Family and friends are asked to meet at the main office before proceeding together to the chapel. A luncheon celebration will follow the service.

Tribute Wall

PC

“ Tony was a friend and valued mentor to me. I owe a lot of what I achieved as an IHSA basketball official to Tony. My deepest sympathy to the family. I will always remember "Uncle" Tony

Patrick Cawiezel - June 02 at 02:04 PM

DA

“ The One & Only, My Uncle Tony! His booming voice, his stories, his ALL-IN totality of living... the last of the O.G. Gurdaks. His fierce loyalty was one of his greatest gifts to family and friends. Love to all who are feeling the loss of this remarkable man.



Dawn Aragón - June 02 at 12:16 PM

RD

“ Tony was a friend, a teammate & a mentor to me! Tony loved life & hit every day running!! My condolences to Carole, the 5 kids & 16 grandkids. He will be missed! Ron & Lynn Dowiarz

Ron & Lynn Dowiarz - June 01 at 04:16 PM