



## Mr. Lary Coppola

August 15, 1950 - September 30, 2023

Lary Coppola, a longtime Manchester resident, a Port of Manchester commissioner, and a former Port Orchard mayor, passed away on Sept. 30, 2023, after a brief battle with pancreatic cancer.

Described by many as a “prince of a person,” a wonderful leader, a “one-of-a-kind” individual, and a gem of a human being, Lary was one of Kitsap’s biggest cheerleaders and a pillar of his community. A doting husband and devoted father and grandfather known as Papa, he was a servant leader with a big heart, which was evident in everything he did.

Born in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on August 15, 1950, Lary moved to the Pacific Northwest in the early ‘70s. Originally an electrician by trade, he later launched a career in publishing, starting with several real estate magazines. As the founder with wife Dee of Port Orchard-based Wet Apple Media, Lary shepherded the growth of several signature West Sound publications, including Kitsap Peninsula Business Journal and WestSound Magazine.

During his 26-year tenure as the publisher and editor of the Kitsap Peninsula Business Journal, Lary was a tireless advocate for local businesses, big and small. One of the Journal’s longtime programs, Forty Under 40, recognized Kitsap’s rising community and business leaders, lifting up new generations of high-achieving professionals in Kitsap. He also championed business growth

through his civic involvements, including as board member of the Kitsap Economic Development Alliance and chair and vice chair of the Kitsap County Planning Commission.

As a business owner and employer, Lary led by example. He made every effort to preserve good relationships with his employees. Behind the scenes, his leadership style showed his belief that downsizing staff in lean times should be avoided if at all possible. Many of his employees considered him a mentor, a friend, and a boss who truly changed their lives.

A self-described gear-head since he was a pre-teen, Lary has been a hot rodder, drag racer, customizer, restorer, and mechanic. All these adventures reflected in his automotive reviews, which were published nationally for over 25 years, including in numerous city and lifestyle magazines around the country.

After a long career in the private sector, Lary was called to public service. He served as the mayor of Port Orchard from 2008 to 2012, bringing the same “get ‘er done” attitude to the job. He promoted the city tirelessly to put it back on the public’s map.

Among many of his accomplishments was the annexation of McCormick Woods and Bethel Corridor to the city, boosting both population and economic development. He was also credited with installing the first electric vehicle charging station in Port Orchard and Kitsap County, attracting new employers to the city, and driving numerous improvement projects, among other things.

Lary’s public career continued when he took the helm as executive director of the Port of Allyn in 2015. For more than seven years, he used his innovative thinking, steadfastness, and tenacity to make the port more efficient, bring in more than \$1 million worth of grants, and implementing a variety of capital projects. In recent months, he began looking forward to a near-future

retirement and spending more time with family.

His professional achievements and accolades are numerous. They include serving as vice chair of the Washington Affordable Housing Council, president and treasurer for two terms each of the Northwest Automotive Press Association, and director of the Building Industry Association of Washington, to name

a few. He was recognized with awards such as the Kitsap Builders Association Associate of the Year and Elected Official of the Year.

Lary gave a hundred percent to anything he pursued. But, while his professional commitments kept him extremely busy, his family was his priority. His friends admired him for his devotion to Miss Dee, the love of his life; and Bryce, his grandson. He enjoyed life to its fullest, pursuing various hobbies such as fishing, boating, and photography.

With Bryce, he especially shared his love of baseball. Growing up with a semi-pro baseball player for a father, Lary developed an unbridled love for the game, going to Yankees' spring training games and playing ball in school. This passion lasted into adulthood, and one of Lary's most memorable moments was taking Bryce on a cross-country baseball trip to visit five stadiums and see nine different teams in seven days. His love for the game extended to longtime volunteering as an umpire for youth baseball games, including for several South Kitsap Little Leagues and Crosspoint High School.

Lary was a mentor and an inspiration to young and old, and he left a deep impact on many people. A straightshooter, he was always fair, kind, and uplifting, and freely shared his knowledge and experience with those who sought his advice. He impacted the community personally, as a member of organizations like the Port Orchard Rotary; and through his business, which

has been supporting a very long list of local nonprofits, fundraisers, and community endeavors.

A great voice for Kitsap, Lary leaves an incredible legacy and a huge void, both in the hearts of those who loved him and felt his positive impact, and the entire community. He'll be remembered in our hearts as someone who had an amazing zest for life and was an inspiration and a remarkable man. In the words of one friend, Heaven got one of its finest to join up there.