



## Roland Fred Gazza "Rolly"

August 18, 1924 - August 12, 2018

Roland Fred Gazza "Rolly", age 93, of Iron Mountain, passed away peacefully at the Oscar G. Johnson Veterans Hospital on August 12, 2018.

"Here comes trouble!"

This is what Rolly often heard as he came into a room, or walked into a building; but he would be the first to say that he was actually more bull than trouble. Even more than that – he was one of a kind.

Rolly was born in Springfield, IL on August 18, 1924; grew up in Iron Mountain; and graduated from Iron Mountain High School with the class of 1943.

One week after graduating high school, Rolly left to Farragut Naval Training Center in Idaho for basic training. He served in the United States Navy during World War II where he was a gunner's mate on the minesweeper USS Devastator. It was during this time, when a kamikaze plane hit the Devastator, and Rolly was injured, that he earned the Purple Heart.

He was then called back to service and served in Korea as a F4U Corsair pilot on the aircraft carrier Sitkoh Bay. While serving there, Rolly was shot down two times, and was part of numerous missions providing close air support to troops on the ground. Finally, Rolly served in Vietnam, where he was one of

13 Americans training members of the French Foreign Legion to fly F8F Bearcat planes.

On September 1, 1956 he married Edith (Edie) Roberts and they began their life together. He often said he was disappointed that he didn't stay in the service longer – but would quickly state, “but then I wouldn't have met Edie”.

Rolly was a pilot – not only in the service, but also for his career and hobby. His love of flying began early on. In fact, when he was a kid, he would go to the airport after school and work just so he could get a 15 minute plane ride!

That is one thing about Rolly; he didn't give up – especially when it came to what he wanted.

Some other words to describe him include:

Sweet. Fun. Hard working. On-the-go. Martini drinker. Husband. Grateful. Bull-headed. Peanut butter connoisseur. Generous. Shoe lover. Dog owner. Uncle. Car accident survivor. Funny. Veteran. A true friend. Hot pepper eater. Social. Thoughtful. Caring. Kind.

Rolly had many interests, but veterans and flying were among those at the top. He belonged to the Dickinson County Pilot's Association; American Legion Post 50, Disabled Veterans of America (DAV); Elks Lodge #700, and the Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 439.

Rolly is survived by his wife of nearly 62 years, Edie; and nieces, nephews, great-nieces and nephews, many, many friends, and his beloved dog Binky.

He was preceded in death by his parents Tony Gazza and Maria Grace (Battistella) Gazza; one sister Emma, three brothers Fred (Amelia), Otto (Mae), Joseph (Catherine), and several nieces and nephews.

Per Rolly's wishes, there will be no visitation or services. Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home is assisting the family.

Rolly and his family want to express their gratitude to Bob Peterson and the staff at the VA Hospital (especially CLC staff, Home Health staff and 4th Floor). Rolly thought the world of the staff and he received such compassionate care. Thank you.

Now, it's time for Rolly's next journey.  
As he would say, "Up, Up and Away!"

Condolences to the family of Roland Fred Gazza "Rolly" may be expressed online at [www.ernashfuneralhomes.com](http://www.ernashfuneralhomes.com).

The family has entrusted the Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home of Iron Mountain with the arrangements.

# Tribute Wall

LM

“ I always remember how Rolly would trot into the store with that little puppy. My prayers and thoughts are with you. Edie you have always inspired me. So much, that I now stage homes in Phoenix worth millions. You would have fun. Miss and love you. Liz

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**Liz murray** - August 25, 2018 at 04:23 PM


MC

“ Edie, I'm very sorry for your loss. I always admired Rolly for his service to our country. Though it's been many years since I've seen you two, I've never forgotten your kindness and friendship.

*Marcus Cairns*

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**Marcus Cairns** - August 19, 2018 at 07:24 PM

 Debbie Gursky

“ So sorry to hear about Rolly and have such wonderful memories. They started while I worked at the El Cap...especially Sunday nights. Then continued with retail Downtown. You both paved the way for some of us behind you and I always appreciated your encouragement. As I look back, you both were Trail Blazers and Rolly gave a few much needed laughs along the way. Sending love and hugs! Debbie Gursky

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**Debbie Gursky** - August 19, 2018 at 03:44 PM

BF

“ Edie Our sympathies - a special person - always a car nut! many memories of all the really neat vehicles he owned - a very talented pilot with a love of flying (was my flight instructor) - May Gods' Special Peace be with you during this time Bob & Patti Forgette

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**Bob Forgette** - August 18, 2018 at 01:33 PM

JH

“ *Edie, So sorry to hear of Rolly's death. What a great life he had!! Remembering all of the years we were neighbors and 'shared' the back yard. We're keeping you in our thoughts and prayers. Take care,  
John and Maria Hyrkas and family*

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**JOHN HYRKAS** - August 18, 2018 at 09:46 AM

SK

“ *We considered it a blessing to have known Rolly the past five years via Silver Sneakers. He always brought an extra spark of enthusiasm to our classes, and yes, we heard "Here comes trouble!". I was glad to be able to sit with him and hold his hand a few days before he died. Edie and Vickie, it was nice meeting you then. Your family is in my thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. May God fill you with His peace.  
With our sympathy, Sally and Doug Karttunen*

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**Sally Karttunen** - August 17, 2018 at 03:17 PM

OW

“ *Sincere sympathy to you Edie in the loss of your life partner . Although I only knew who Rollie was when he was with you wherever that might have been, I recall a warm smile or greeting.. My Prayers are with you. May God comfort you in the days ahead.  
Orice Walters*

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**Orice Walters** - August 16, 2018 at 04:39 PM

KL

“ *Edie, I am so sorry for your loss. He was an amazing man, I thoroughly enjoyed working side by side with him. He was like a second father to me and always made me laugh and smile. He sure knew how to play jokes on me. I have a very heavy heart but wonderful memories. Please take care of yourself. Rest easy Rollie. Love Little Sarge.*

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**karen Larson** - August 16, 2018 at 10:43 AM

DB

“ *Dear Edie,*

*So sorry to hear of Rolly's passing. My deepest sympathy to you and your family.*

*Thinking back to the "old" days, hanging out with you both and having great times with many laughs.*

*Keeping you in my thoughts and prayers.*

*Most Sincerely,*

*Dahly Bosley*

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**Dahly Bosley** - August 15, 2018 at 06:52 PM