



Dennis Michael Connolly

August 19, 1945 - November 2, 2025

Dennis Michael Connolly, of Napa, CA, passed away peacefully at home on Nov. 2 after a brief illness. He was surrounded by his daughters and favorite dog Jax. Dennis was born and raised in Brooklyn and Long Island NY to Patrick and Elizabeth Connolly. He lived there for 42 years before relocating to Napa, CA. His was a life defined by determination, intelligence, humor, and heart.

A true scholar-athlete, Dennis excelled both in the classroom and on the field. Skipping a grade, he graduated from Bishop Laughlin High School in Brooklyn at just 16 years old, while playing baseball, running track and consistently making honor roll. Shortly after, he was drafted into the U.S. Marine Corps and bravely served in Vietnam, where he was wounded in action and awarded the Purple Heart.

At the end of his military service, Dennis met his wife Karen (Brozek). While dating, Karen asked him when they would get married, and he said “When the Mets win the World Series”. Thanks to the Miracle New York Mets historic championship run, Dennis and Karen were engaged in 1969 and married the following year. This was a story he loved to tell, his pride and excitement still obvious many years later when he shared the tale with Mets pitcher Tom Seaver at a vineyard business meeting.

Dennis earned his degree in accounting from Adelphi University and began building a successful career in finance while working with Deloitte and Nestlé in New York. In 1987 Dennis accepted a job transfer that moved him and his family to Napa where he worked for Beringer Vineyards as the Manager of Vineyard Accounting and Capital Expenditures for many years. In “retirement,” Dennis loved to lead people on tours of the valley and local wineries and provided personal driving services. His sharp mind, quick wit, outgoing nature and integrity earned the respect of colleagues and friends alike.

Outside of work, Dennis was a man of many passions. A devoted fan of the Mets, Jets, Knicks and Islanders, he loved New York sports and developed an admirable emotional fortitude, bravely enduring decades of disappointment. Dennis, affectionately known as “Rookie,” played softball for over 40 years and enjoyed golf. An accomplished bowler, he achieved a perfect 300 score and multiple 290’s, in addition to many other accolades throughout his bowling career. Eventually, back pain led him to pursue his other interests, especially music. Dennis was in his element wherever there was laughter, rhythm, and good company. To this end, he created a weekly Elk’s open mic night, sang Karaoke, and enjoyed live music at his second home of Myrtle Beach, where he embraced every opportunity to sing with the band. Dennis was an active member of several community groups including the Knights of Columbus in NY, and the Elks, Moose Lodge, American Legion, the Napa Baby Boomers Widows/Widowers group and the Marine Corps League in Napa. In further commitment to his community, Dennis served as chair and co-chair of the Wine Industry Network’s annual “Gutterball Classic” Rock-A-Bowl Tournament since 1997, helping endow W.I.N.’s scholarship fund for the Napa Valley College Foundation.

Dennis’ friends and family will remember his wisdom, his dry sense of humor, his blunt honesty, and the energetic vigor he brought to every room he entered. The favorite phrases he loved to repeat will not be forgotten: “Such is

life;” “Everything in moderation;” and Frank Sinatra’s “If you live every day like it was your last, one day you’ll be right.” Dennis loved people and had a big heart, always willing to help those in need, often quietly and without fanfare. He was beloved for his unique ability to foster connections with everyone he knew. He lived life on his own terms, fought fiercely for those he loved and defended strongly held beliefs, always with determination and optimism. He will be deeply and profoundly missed, yet his laughter, kindness, Brooklyn attitude and favorite tunes will forever echo in the hearts of all who knew him.

Dennis was predeceased by his beloved wife Karen, parents Patrick and Elizabeth, parents in-law Milan and Margaret Brozek, and his brother Patrick. He is survived by his two loving daughters, Kelli Larose (Jonathan) and Kerri Connolly, and grandson Jacob Larose, his pride and joy, whose graduation from Villanova University he joyfully attended last May. He is also survived by his close cousins, Jack Young (Peachie) and Michael Young, whom he affectionately considered his “brothers,” his sister-in-law Janet Castelli (Sal), and numerous cousins and nieces.

A celebration of Dennis’ life will be held on Jan.31 at 1pm at the Napa Elks Lodge. He made it clear that he did not want his memorial to be a sad occasion, but rather a party and celebration, just like the way he lived life. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to the Napa Marine Corp League or the Wine Industry Network Team Win! Scholarship Fund. Or, simply honor his memory by toasting to life, watching a Mets/Jets game, and enjoying good music and good company — just as he always did. Memories or notes of sympathy may be shared at claffeyandrota.com, who have facilitated cremation services.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JAN 31. 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM (PT)

Elk's Lodge of Napa
2840 Soscal Ave.
Napa, CA 94558

Tribute Wall

EE

“ *A truly intelligent wonderful man. Definitely had a heart of gold. I was blessed to have known you-My friend.*

Elizabeth Evans - November 18, 2025 at 07:03 AM

JA

“ *God bless you, Dennis, and all your family. Dennis was one of my absolute favorites—not only on Facebook, but every time I was lucky enough to run into him out and about. I loved hearing him sing, watching him bowl, listening to his stories, and seeing his excitement every time Myrtle Beach was coming up. What an accomplished, genuine, and unforgettable man. You will truly be missed, my friend. Until we meet again.*
Your friend,
Big Daddy



joseph aldrige - November 18, 2025 at 03:02 AM

LM

“ *Myrtle Beach will have an empty spot from now on! We will miss his face at Ocean Annies and inside Sandals singing a Jimmy Buffet song! Our wine parties will be held in remembrance of Dennis who started this tradition. We will raise a glass, remember a story and make a toast to our buddy who has now embraced a new beginning. RIP our friend. SEMPER Fi USA. 💔*
Leslie McKenzie

Leslie McKenzie - November 17, 2025 at 11:31 PM