



## Daniel James Samela

February 16, 2022

Daniel James Samela, 73, of Waterbury passed away peacefully at his home, following his nine month battle with pancreatic cancer, on February 16th surrounded by his loving family. As a child and throughout his teenage years, Dan loved spending all of his free time playing football and baseball. There was nothing more that Dan loved than to share his stories of playing competitive youth sports, including playing for city championships, and playing at Municipal Stadium in Waterbury. He graduated in 1966 from Crosby High School and went on to earn a Bachelor's degree from Providence College; at Providence he was able to continue his passion and love of baseball, where he played center field for the Friars. After a successful junior season, he was offered a spot playing outfield for the Bourne Braves of the prestigious Cape Cod Collegiate Summer League. Dan valued and cherished sportsmanship and always had a competitive nature. His love and passion for sports lives on in his children and grandchildren. Dan has forever put others ahead of himself. He adored spending time with his family at cook outs by the pool. and appreciated the simple beauty of fall foliage and walks on the beach in Madison. Dan loved ice cream, a good hot dog, and would often be heard humming to music. Retirement was not in Dan's cards. Throughout his entire life, he demonstrated a work ethic second to none, and believed in providing any opportunity for his family, no matter how hard he had to work for it. Over the years Dan has been called a husband, colleague, Coach Senior, friend, cousin, brother, son, uncle, & dog sitter extraordinaire; but his true legacy is

that of a father and grandfather. His family is his legacy. He was a constant support to Barbara, his former wife, lifelong friend, and mother to his children; He was known as “dad” to his five kids, David, Amy, Brian, Chris and Hayley; and father-in-law to Katie, Tracey and Rob. Dan was always helping someone, and was the best listener around. Dan was also known as “Grampa” to Jake, Lauren, Jaden, Maggie, Tyson, and Paige. Every Saturday and Sunday he would be running from one baseball game to another one, then off to a lacrosse game, hockey game, or volleyball game. After a game, Grampa was known to text the grandkids giving them feedback on how they played; they valued his thoughts and knew he was always present, supporting them every step of the way. Dan will be Forever Loved, Forever Missed, & Forever in our Hearts. And we know he will forever be watching from the stands. A Celebration of Life will be scheduled for family and friends.

# Tribute Wall

AM

“ We spent our youth living in a three family house in Waterbury. Four cousins. My cousin Diane lived on the third floor, Danny and his brother Len on the second, and me on the first floor with my mother, Nonny and Grandpa and our three uncles. We were always together.

*Life was good! We had a huge empty lot next door and this was the site of many baseball games. Danny always had friends around, and my cousin, Diane and I were the only girls on the street. So, we learned to play baseball and were actually quite good at it.*

*Sometimes we would play in our driveway , but that would often aggravate our Grandpa . The ball would on occasion go into the garden and knock tomatoes off of his plants. His garden was his pride and joy, as gardens are with all Italian Grandpas. Summer days seemed endless.*

*SO MANY MEMORIES! Picnics in the yard. Together for every holiday. The annual picnic at Rockwell Park. We always went on a Sunday, get there early, and spend all day. Being Italian, a Sunday couldn't go by without pasta and meatballs. My grandmother would make sauce and we would bring it to the park. As other families were grilling out, we would be enjoying pasta and leaving the regular picnic fare of burgers and hot dogs for the suppertime meal. Danny always loved sauce and meatballs and being a loving and loyal Italian son thought his mom's was the best. I have to say that his mom ,my Aunt Kate did make a delicious sauce. That woman could really roll a meatball!*

*Memories of vacations at Milford Beach. We would rent a beach house big enough to accommodate the entire Samela clan. By this time we had five more cousins added to the family. Even more memories. Walking up to Fulton Park in the summer. Ice skating at night on the second pond in the winter at Fulton.*

*When Danny started playing baseball on a team his Mom, Dad, brother Len, Diane, and I would go to his games. From Babe Ruth, American Legion to Crosby High School. We never missed a game. We had so much fun cheering for him and his team. Danny also played football and was the quarterback for Crosby High School's team. He was always such a great athlete. Those were such good*

*times!*

*Time goes on and everyone grows up and starts drifting apart, making new memories with their own kids and grandkids.*

*I'm so glad that I had the chance to reconnect with Dan these past few months. We had lost track of each other, but it was nice to talk to him again.*

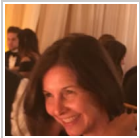
*Through his illness he was so brave and upbeat. He always had some kind words and always asked how my family and I were doing. He had a positive attitude and carried himself with dignity and strength through such a horrible time. He has been an inspiration to me and I am in awe at his braveness.*

*We talked about how much our kids and grandkids meant to us and how they added so much love and joy to our lives.*

*Dan, be at peace knowing that you were a terrific Dad and that you have been loved by so many. Love that you have undoubtedly carried with you to Heaven. Your cousin, Ann Marie Rinaldi*

---

**Ann Marie** - March 04, 2022 at 03:19 PM



“ *Thanks everyone for sharing; these memories mean the world to all of us.*

*Please come and celebrate our dad's life on Sunday, March 27th at 2:00 at Hawk's Landing Country Club, Southington.*

---

**Amy Samela** - March 01, 2022 at 09:02 PM

RM

*Amy I am a good friend of your Dad. Please reach out to me if you can at 203 249 9116. I played baseball on a number of teams with your Dad and I was with Dan on Dec 21st last year. I love your Dad. He is a great friend. Love to hear from you. Thank you. Richie Morano*

---

**Richie Morano** - March 14, 2022 at 09:18 PM

RL

“ So many great childhood memories of playing baseball together, hanging out at each other's house and with the 3 families on Pearl Street.

---

**Rick and Carolyn Laudisi** - March 01, 2022 at 12:17 PM

KS

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



---

**Kate Samela** - March 01, 2022 at 09:59 AM

KS

*Grandpa with his grandkids in Old Saybrook; August 2021*

---

**Kate Samela** - March 01, 2022 at 10:01 AM

“ Growing up in Waterbury with my big brother was a pretty wonderful and largely carefree existence. Our days, when not in school, were filled with various sporting endeavors. Dan and I and friends had wiffle ball tournaments in our back yard, much to the chagrin of our grandparents and aunts and uncles who lived on the first floor, and whose back door was more often than not hit with line drives. There was also one-on-one basketball in the driveway, before and after NBA games. Fall found us having football catches in the back yard with little brother (me) somehow always being the one to “go long”. If memory serves me, there was always a perfect spiral from Dan.

Dan and I only had a couple of occasions where we were direct competitors. We may never have had the opportunity to truly compete on the field had it not been for the redistricting of high schools when I was entering my freshman year. That redistricting put me in Wilby while Dan was finishing high school at Crosby. Our first encounter was on the football field on a Saturday afternoon when Crosby had a very big lead. I was given the opportunity to take the field as a defensive back. It didn't take long for Dan to pick on his kid brother sending a speedy wide receiver in my direction and hitting him with a perfect spiral (shocker). Touchdown Crosby. It now occurs to me that I likely helped Dan perfect that play on all those Sunday afternoons.

Later that school year, I had my chance at redemption on the baseball field at Fulton Park. There I found myself on the mound with Dan getting in the batter's box. I don't remember how many pitches later, but I managed to get him to pop out in the infield. We were now even.

Other things that come to mind when I think back on our childhood together are annual trips to Biener's Sporting Goods, trying to time those trips to coincide with their receiving their newest shipment of wood bats. I also remember our Dad buying Dan a new glove which I promptly lost when I left it in the front yard in plain sight for someone to walk away with.

*People sometimes say that it is hard to follow in the footsteps of a successful older sibling, especially one of the same sex. Because of who Dan was, that was never difficult for me to do. In fact, it was pretty easy as he always lit the right path to follow. While there was certainly competition during wiffle ball games and one-on-one basketball, it was always friendly and always constructive competition. Dan made this all pretty easy.*

*Adulthood saw us drawn closer together at times and farther apart at others, depending on life's circumstances for either of us at any particular moment of time. Thankfully, our most recent years saw us being closer, with dinners at Nino's where we both ordered what we always ordered; both being serious creatures of habit. Our dinner conversations ALWAYS revolved around discussions of family, comparing notes on what our respective children and grandchildren were up to. One of Dan's favorite things in life was to talk about the various members of his family, and he always did so with so much pride. That was landmark Dan.*

*I will miss my Big Brother, I now know more than I could ever have imagined. He will never really leave my life and certainly never leave my heart. I pray that his family can find some comfort during this difficult time by drawing on the wonderful memories that they were so fortunate to have shared with him over the years. He gave so much to all of them and to all of us and did so with a smile. That is how I will remember Dan. With a smile.*

---

**Len Samela** - February 28, 2022 at 08:34 AM

RM

*Lenny, this is Richie Morano. I would love to talk with you. You can reach me at 203 249 9116. I loved Danny. We played baseball together on a number of teams. We were together after many years on 12/1/2021 at Bobby Browns funeral. We talked to each other every Christmas Eve and texted often. I remember you Lenny. Not sure if you know me. I am so taken back. In fact last night, I dreamed of Danny and cried my eyes out. Hope to hear from you. Richie*

---

**Richie Morano** - March 14, 2022 at 09:26 PM

“ It is with great sadness that I write this tribute to Dan Samela and mourn his passing. While this is a sad time for all of us whose lives were touched by Dan, we may find some solace in the fond memories we shared with him. My first memory of Dan was when I was a spectator in the stands of municipal Stadium. I was watching my older brother play football for Wilby High School in the first game of the day. It was late in the third-quarter and teams were coming in the stands for the second game. Crosby football players were coming in the entranceway to watch part of the Wilby game before they ventured down into the locker rooms to suit up for the next game. I caught a glimpse of a kid leading the rest of the team to their seats in the bleachers. He was wearing his football shirt, a medium blue jersey with a white number 10. They were talking and laughing but it was clear that the conversation centered around number 10. This kid had charisma. He was a leader. He exhibited confidence and I could see that he was respected by his teammates. They left shortly after they sat down to get ready for their game, but I had to know who this kid was because he had to be a great player. I went down to the concession area and bought a program for the Crosby game. Number 10 was the quarterback named Dan Samela. I stayed and watch the beginning of the game and my evaluation was confirmed. This kid was really good. Not surprising, he was also a good baseball player, and later on went on to play baseball for Providence College.

Barely a year later I enrolled at Wilby High School and joined the football team. I immediately made friends with a kid that was a very good athlete. His name was Len Samela, Dan's younger brother, who also a few years later went on to play baseball at Amherst College. We became best friends and we are still best friends to this day. I remembered the Samela name from that program. When I finally got to meet Dan, I looked upon him as one of my mentors, and someone I could look up to. I never told either one of them the story and I'm revealing it for the first time now. Knowing Dan and being best friends with Len, I had a connection with the Samela family. The connection was highlighted by my marriage to their cousin, Diane, woven from the same cloth as Dan and Len.

*The obituary points out the many admirable qualities of Dan as father, husband and grandfather. I would also add great brother and friend. I am thankful for having the pleasure of knowing Dan and his great family. He will be sorely missed.*

*James Cipriano*

---

**James V. Cipriano** - February 27, 2022 at 09:52 PM

JG

“ Test

---

**Jesse Gomes** - February 27, 2022 at 06:28 PM

“ My forever thoughts and prayers go out to the Samela family. Dan and I were great friends and we both loved playing baseball together. Dan was in centerfield, and I was in leftfield. In the many years that we played together, we were always proud to reflect that, "only one ball got by us!" Yet, it became one of the great plays of our time. when the line drive went over my head, in leftfield, and I retrieved the ball then fired it to Dan, who then fired it to Dan Briotti, who then fired it to our catcher Jack Gieson, who then tagged the player who hit the ball, (not to mention the players name) out at home plate. A three-way cutoff, that won the game.

Our coach John Reardon called it one of the best plays in his years coaching high school baseball. Why? It was a "team" effort (of which Danny was all about) and a play we loved to practice, often.

Dan and I, over the past few years, would catch up with one another by phone. About four years ago we attended a luncheon with some of our former pals. Several of them, we had not seen in 50 years. They were teammates, of ours, i.e., Babe Ruth, Crosby High School, American Legion, and Semi Pro. Bobby Brown (coach and mentor) and Frank Longo, mutual friends, who participated in this luncheon. They passed away recently, and I know for certain, that Danny will be welcomed with "open arms," by his Savior and by his friends. He will take centerfield where he rules.

More importantly, than all the baseball times together, I can call Danny a best friend. Why? He is always the gentleman, a person of integrity, supportive, smart, family oriented, ability to laugh it off, kind, and every positive virtue you can say about a person. I was fortunate to have met and known Danny for over 60 years. Waterbury, Ct., can be proud of one of its finest sons!

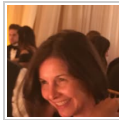
I will always have Danny in my thoughts and with the fondest of memories. I will miss our phone calls and the many years we played baseball together and especially, the ice cream at Carvels near Fulton Park.

*I am missing the man with all my heart and soul. My great friend,  
Dan Samela.*



---

**Rich Morano** - February 26, 2022 at 08:45 AM



*Thank you so much for sharing these memories. This brought smile me  
tears thinking of my dad in this way. We shared this with his six  
grandkids as they love hearing his baseball memories.  
Kindly, Amy (Dan's daughter)*

---

**Amy Samela** - February 27, 2022 at 08:27 AM

BR

*Rick...thank you for sharing. I have heard my father tell that story so  
many times. I put my father back in uniform as a coach with me as my  
bench coach for 5 seasons. He shared so much wisdom to my players,  
he was called coach senior, or just senior. The banter we had in the  
dugout, the in game decisions and the one on one conversations he  
had with the players was priceless.  
Those times I shred with him is what miss. Brian, son*

---

**brian** - February 27, 2022 at 10:15 AM