



Mrs. Julia "Judy" (Colon) Irizarry

April 12, 1933 - October 4, 2025

UTICA – Mrs. Julia “Judy” (Colon) Irizarry, age 92, passed away on Saturday, October 4, 2025, reuniting with her beloved husband and daughter. She was surrounded by her loving family at the time of her passing.

Born in Añasco, Puerto Rico, on April 12, 1933, Julia was the daughter of the late Claudio and Flora (Feliciano) Colón. Judy lost her mother at an early age and helped raise her younger sister, Carmen, and brother, Gilberto. In the 1950s, she moved to New York with her father and brother, eventually settling in East Utica to seek employment and reunite with Carmen, who had relocated there earlier.

Judy met Felipe “Chote” Irizarry in 1961, and the two were married on June 16, 1962. Together, they shared a loving and devoted union for 61 years, creating many beautiful memories and enjoying a truly blessed family life until Chote’s passing on April 5, 2024. Judy found deep meaning in being a mother and caring for her family. She looked to the Blessed Mother as her guiding example.

Judy found work soon after arriving in Utica, joining the textile mill known as Tower City. Around 1967, she and Chote opened the first Puerto Rican-American diner in Utica, all while Chote continued working for New York Central Railroads. Phillip’s Diner, named after their first-born son, quickly

became a beloved local spot. They sold the restaurant in 1969 when Judy became pregnant with twins, Oscar and Noemi.

In the mid-1970s, Judy returned to the workforce as a teacher's aide in the Utica City School District, teaching English as a Second Language. She began at Brandegee Elementary School and spent over 30 years working in schools throughout the Utica City School District. Her students—newly arriving immigrants—were cared for and loved as if they were her own. Early in her career, most of her students were Hispanic. Later, she taught children from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Bosnia, and the Middle East.

Later in life, Judy and Chote developed rental properties to supplement the family's income. Judy had an impeccable natural skill for bookkeeping, managing the business side with care and precision. They were proud, patriotic Americans who worked tirelessly—first to bring their families from Puerto Rico to New York, and then to raise their own children.

Vacations were spent visiting their children and grandchildren who lived outside of Utica. Judy was never self-indulgent; she always prioritized her family. As parents, she and Chote instilled in their children a strong work ethic and a deep sense of service to their community and country. They were a complementary team who truly lived and worked the American Dream.

In her spare time, Judy enjoyed gardening at her home in North Utica. A tremendous cook, she loved sharing her dishes with family, friends, and neighbors. She learned to cook Italian cuisine and often blended traditional Puerto Rican and Italian recipes, creating meals that reflected both cultures. Judy also enjoyed shopping for the best kitchen gadgets, always on the lookout for tools to enhance her cooking.

Above all, she considered her greatest accomplishment to be her family. She

truly lived by faith and by family. A devout Roman Catholic, she had been a faithful congregant of Historic Old St. John's Church since arriving in Utica.

Judy is survived by her sister, Carmen "Luz" Aviles (the late Aurelio Aviles); and sons and daughters-in-law, Phillip and Carol Irizarry, and Oscar and Shellie Irizarry. She treasured the memory of her beloved daughter, Noemi Irizarry Goeckel, who passed away on March 4, 2024. She leaves to cherish her memory her grandchildren, Kara and Aaron Ross; Justin Sr. and Erin "Rin" Irizarry; Phillip and Jennifer Goeckel, Julia and Devin Anderson; Charlotte Irizarry, and Erin Irizarry; great-grandchildren, Aadriana, Julian, Silas, Luke Ross; Angie Laibe; Justin Jr., and Johnny Irizarry; Isabella Goeckel, Stephen Anderson, and Elliana Ross, who was born just one day prior to Judy's passing.

She is further survived by her nieces, nephews and their families, to whom Judy was like a second mother, Claudio Aviles, Mirta Aviles, and Norma Aviles-Downs; in-laws, Juan Irizarry, Gladys Irizarry (the late Emilio Irizarry), and "Peter" Enrique and Gloria Molina; and the friends she was blessed with, Philip Geraci, and Rita Placanaca Fuller, whom she loved as her own children.

Judy was additionally predeceased by her brother, Gilberto Colon; father-in-law and mother-in-law, Pablo Juan and Venera (Molina) Irizarry; and her in-laws, Natividad "Nati" "Goly" Irizarry, Elisa M. Disla, Nicolas and Lenor Irizarry, Pablo M. "Pavin" Irizarry, Anita "Ana" and Manuel A. Zayas, and Santos I. Irizarry Molina and Elsa Molina.

The family would like to extend their gratitude to the staff in the Saul Unit at the Katherine Luther Home for the amazing care and love given to Judy and Chote while they resided there together.

Visitation will take place Thursday, October 9, 2025, from 9:30-10:30 a.m. at Historic Old St. John's Church, 240 Bleecker St. Julia's Mass of Christian Burial and Celebration of Life will commence at 10:30 a.m. at the church. For those unable to attend, the Mass will be livestreamed at <https://www.youtube.com/@eannacefuneralhome804>. Memorial contributions in Julia's honor may be made to the Building Fund of Historic Old St. John's Church, by mail to 240 Bleecker St., Utica, NY 13501; envelopes will also be available at the service. Interment will follow in Calvary Cemetery.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Eannace Funeral Home, Inc., 932 South St., corner of Hammond Ave.

Cemetery Details

Calvary Cemetery

2407 Oneida Street
Utica, NY 13501
(315) 735-2727

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT 9. 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

Historic Old St. John's Church
240 Bleecker Street
Utica, NY 13501
(315) 724-6159
<https://www.historicoldstjohnschurch.com/>

Funeral Service

OCT 9. 10:30 AM (ET)

Historic Old St. John's Church
240 Bleecker Street
Utica, NY 13501
(315) 724-6159
<https://www.historicoldstjohnschurch.com/>

Tribute Wall

SS

“ I'm so sorry to hear of Judy's passing. I worked with "Mrs. I" for my first 5 years of my career at General Herkimer Elementary School. I have such fond memories of working with her - we were a "TEAM". I still use one of her favorite phrases she taught me in the classroom, when we would lament about certain behaviors, "Caramba!". She was my "Utica Mom", as I'm from Albany and didn't have any family in Utica. She will always be associated with my first job and all I learned those first 5 years. I loved her empanadillas, and sitting in her kitchen chatting about life: the big and the small things. I will miss you, Mrs. I. Te Amo, tu amigita, Stacey

STACEY A SWANSON - November 04, 2025 at 08:05 PM

AR

“ Nieto de Abuelita Bonita

I was truly blessed to know and love my Abuelita Bonita. It was a name so easily given to a woman who made a tremendous impact in my life. She reminded me of my very own godmother, Francisca Arroyo, and treated me like one of her very own. She was a special woman who blessed the lives of all that she knew, and would go above and beyond to ensure they knew they were loved. I'll never forget the memories (and recipes) we shared, and they will continue to live on in our hearts and in our kitchen. We love you more than words can describe, Abuelita Bonita, and know this is not goodbye, but hasta luego. We can't wait to meet again with our Lord and Savior on your side of heaven. May the Lord bless you, your family, and all who were so fortunate to know you. Te quiero MAS!



Tu Nieto, Aaron

Aaron Ross - October 09, 2025 at 12:00 AM

Jl

“Heaven has gained another beautiful angel. Lala, we will love and cherish you forever!

"Some people bring a light so great into the world that even after they have gone, the light remains".



Justin & Erin Irizarry - October 08, 2025 at 06:24 PM

MI

“Prayer for my Tia and her children during this difficult time.



Marcia Irizarry - October 07, 2025 at 08:32 PM



“Forever Our Angel Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mrs. Julia "Judy" (Colon) Irizarry.



October 07, 2025 at 05:09 PM

MM

“Mary and Bob Morton purchased the Beautiful Heart Bouquet for the family of Mrs. Julia "Judy" (Colon) Irizarry.



Mary and Bob Morton - October 07, 2025 at 04:33 PM

MM

“ Mary and Bob Morton planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mrs. Julia "Judy" (Colon) Irizarry.

Mary and Bob Morton - October 07, 2025 at 04:33 PM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mrs. Julia "Judy" (Colon) Irizarry.



October 07, 2025 at 12:25 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Mrs. Julia "Judy" (Colon) Irizarry.

October 07, 2025 at 12:25 PM