



Robert "Bob" C. Rosa, Jr.

August 16, 1948 - November 6, 2025

PEORIA - Robert C. Rosa, Jr., 77, of Peoria died Thursday, November 6, 2025, at his residence.

He was born on August 16, 1948 in Chicago, the son of Robert Clarence and Helen Louise (Kirby) Rosa Sr. They preceded him in death. Bob is survived by his wife, Barbara (Knollhoff-Walters); daughters, Christina (Justin) Abatie and Jennifer (J Scott Hinkley II) Rosa; grandchildren, Owen, Grayson, Makenzie, Norah, Larkin, and Willa; brother, John (Pamela) Rosa; and two nephews, Robert Rosa and Jack Rosa.

In Rosa's youth, he was the Captain of the wrestling team displaying exceptional physical and mental prowess. As a young adult he went on to join the Army Reserves as a Green Beret in the Special Forces. Highlights of his several years in the Green Berets included his Airborne experiences particularly loving the thrill of jumping from aircrafts.

Into his adulthood, heights didn't stop him from pursuing roles he enjoyed. Literal heights-loving jobs included being a chimney sweep to eventually reaching nationally recognized heights in the world of powerlifting. Bob was a perpetual student of human health and fitness, natural healing and supplementation, thoughtful training, and generously provided his vast wealth of skill with others. Often described as soft-spoken (and silly) in nature yet

incredibly knowledgeable in the area of health and Olympic-level weight training.

In 1974 Bob Rosa founded Central Illinois Weightlifting Gym initially on Peoria's North Knoxville Avenue as well as Pekin's Derby Street, then finally on Southwest Adams Street in Peoria. As 'Powerlifting USA' Magazine published, "Little did the young entrepreneur know that his fledgling enterprise was destined to become a Peoria institution that would influence weight training worldwide."

Rosa's Gym would exist over 40 years having produced notable protégés that were internationally recognized Olympic lifters, bodybuilders, and serial record-breaking powerlifters. World Champion Legends including Mike Bridges, Freddie Higgins, and many more trained under Rosa's tutelage and contributed to the hundreds of records set and shattered at Central Illinois Weightlifting Gym.

Though his historic and iconic hardcore gym became known for producing heavy-lifting royalty, Rosa's passion for health extended to anyone who entered his doors from all ages and every walk of life. It was a place of serious sport, yet he created an atmosphere of camaraderie and equity.

While very much a mountain of a man, he relished taking on supportive roles for his children. With pride he proved to be a vocal cheerleader of his daughters and their vastly different areas of interests...worlds away from arm wrestling and bodybuilding meets. He provided a foundation of following dreams just as he had in taking a leap of faith on lifting.

His life's passion was helping people be strong and healthy. In later years, tragically, the knowledge and lessons that were engrained in him and in those who he helped, could not save his life.

His expertise has improved the lives of countless others over the years, and the family welcomes the sharing of stories from the community. Those with pictures, videos, and anecdotes to share, are asked to please send them to: bobrosa1948@gmail.com.

Per his wishes, cremation rites have been accorded.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions to help assist the family during this difficult transition may be sent to Venmo: @RosaMemorialFund (<https://www.venmo.com/u/RosaMemorialFund>) and Cash App: \$RosaMemorial ([https://cash.app/\\$RosaMemorial](https://cash.app/$RosaMemorial))

Online condolences may be made at www.schmidthaller.com.

Tribute Wall

DS

“ Just heard bob died. He was in my wedding and we already to do the ceremony and bob looked down and saw he had the wrong shoes on. So off he went to get the right shoes. lol I lifted for years at Central Illinois Gym and the information we learned and tried is still with most of us today. Lots of the strongest athletes came from his gym. Even professional wrestler when in town came to his gym to workout. It was sad toward the end but the good times and knowledge will leave never leave. Rest in Peace Bob.

Dan Swift - November 14, 2025 at 07:53 PM

GB

“ I remember my younger cousin Bob as someone who enjoyed physically demanding activity. As a high school wrestler myself, I encouraged Bob to take up wrestling and boy did he do well. Thru the years Bob's mother kept me updated on his activities. In his memory I planted a grove of 5 trees. My prayers to Barbara and family.

Georgen Brunner - November 13, 2025 at 10:23 PM

KL

“ Bob was my father’s very best friend. I remember jokes about watermelons growing in my stomach if I ate the seeds to silliness while our families camped together. New Year’s Eve was always the time for a visit, with lots of snacks and joking (and Weird Al music). Every night after work Dad and my oldest cousin Mark would go to the gym after work. He would joke about all of the new guys at the gym asking if him and Bob were brothers. And in a way they were. To me they were what men were supposed to be - brave, loyal, silly, kind, strong.

When Dad lost his eyesight and slowly his memory he would ask me how Bob was doing. Dad has been in Memory Care for several years now. I’ll continue to tell him Bob is still over at the gym or he’d stop by for a visit.

Much love from the Larimores,
Kelly

Kelly Larimore - November 12, 2025 at 08:53 PM

GB

I'll miss you bob every dad from your friend Gary Brown lol

Garold Lynn Brown - December 30, 2025 at 08:26 PM

RH

“ Bob was great. Taught me everything I know about lifting. Was able to compete in bodybuilding and powerlifting because of his encouragement. A great mentor and inspiration! Roger Horton

Roger Horton - November 12, 2025 at 09:55 AM

GB

“ George Brunner planted a grove of 5 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Robert "Bob" C. Rosa, Jr..

George Brunner - November 10, 2025 at 07:42 PM

TK

“ Bob or “Bobbie” as I knew him as a young kid was a very shy and soft spoken cousin. We spent many Christmas dinners together as youngsters. Even though we didn’t live too close to each other’s families I always enjoyed visiting the Rosa house on Moss Avenue. What a mansion. I send best wishes to his family and hope he is resting in peace. Terri Kirby

Terri Kirby - November 10, 2025 at 04:38 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Robert "Bob" C. Rosa, Jr..



November 10, 2025 at 04:02 PM

MB

“ Mike Brunner planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Robert "Bob" C. Rosa, Jr..

Mike Brunner - November 10, 2025 at 04:02 PM