



## Hank Salemi

May 10, 1964 - January 9, 2022

Hank Salemi, a resident of Libertyville, IL and highly respected President of Six Flags Great America passed away unexpectedly on January 9, 2022.

Hank was the embodiment of everything we all adore about the perfect Dad Joke: funny, warm, clever, delivered with perfect timing and a sparkling eye. He had the rare ability to make everyone around him feel valued, and his wit and wisdom made us all better people.

Hank taught us to treasure family, genuinely “see” the people around us, listen to all perspectives before making a decision, live with integrity, lead with kindness, and cheer for Alabama. May he watch every game from the best seat in the house.

Hank’s world revolved around his wife Kathleen and his daughter Claire. He was endlessly proud of both of them and delighted in Claire’s success in school and her many activities. He once wrote that Claire was the “light in any given day” and always beamed when talking about her. Hank and Kathleen met and married in their mid-30s, a union most assuredly touched by God.

They connected instantly, were true soulmates from the start and complemented each other in every way. Hank, Kathleen and Claire always had another trip on the calendar and loved seeing the world together. Another lesson to learn from Hank: your family is the most important thing, so love them unabashedly and that includes the family dogs Gus, Dixie and Ben.

Hank’s creative genius, both in his amazing writing skills and ability to tell a story and deliver a punchline, made us all want to be in the room with him. His

polite Southern demeanor and a “drawl” that kicked in when he was back in his home state was part of his charm. And if you were ever hugged by Hank, you surely knew how he felt about you. His childhood bonds never wavered and his ability to make and maintain friendships around the world was a rare gift. He enjoyed poker night with the guys, cooking on his grill and smoker, making his dad's Italian pasta sauce, as well as nights out and trips with Kathleen and friends.

Hank was in the people business, beginning his career with Ringling Brothers/Feld Entertainment in Boston, before moving to Chicago where he worked for Ogden Corporation. Hank found his professional home of 24 years at Six Flags and was deeply loved and respected by his entire Six Flags family. As Park President, he was responsible for both full time and seasonal team members for 16 years and operated Six Flags Great America in Gurnee, IL. Prior to his current role, Hank was Chief Marketing Officer for Six Flags Corporate based in Oklahoma City, in charge of all marketing and advertising for 40 parks worldwide. In addition to his leadership at Six Flags, Hank was a global leader serving on the Board of IAAPA International Amusement Parks Association for the last seven years. During his time with IAAPA, he was elected as the association’s treasurer and chairman of the IAAPA Compensation Committee. Recently, he received the distinguished Special Services Award for his exemplary contributions guiding major decisions for the association. He was the leader we all aspire to be - an expert in his field and an expert in being a friend, a coach, and a cheerleader. Throughout his dedicated career in the amusement industry, both locally and internationally, it is not an exaggeration to say that Hank truly touched thousands of lives. Hank was born on May 10, 1964, in Birmingham, AL, to Barbara and Henry Salemi. He was a loving and supportive son and brother all of his life. He lived in Boston, Charleston, and the Chicagoland area; moved to Oklahoma and then back to Chicago, settling in Libertyville in 2006. He graduated from the University of Alabama and was a member of St. Joseph Parish in Libertyville. Surviving Hank is his wife of 21 years, Kathleen; daughter, Claire; mother,

Barbara Salemi; sister, Debra Salemi; and many nieces, nephews and in-laws spanning Alabama, Chicago, Colorado, Michigan, and Washington, all who treasured him dearly.

He was preceded in death by a beautiful infant daughter, Colleen Salemi, his father, Henry Salemi and by his sister, Sherry Cummings.

A funeral mass will be held at 10:30 a.m. Monday, January 17, 2022 at St. Joseph Church, 121 E. Maple Avenue, Libertyville, IL. We realize these are challenging times and we are striving to make this a safe environment to celebrate Hank's life. Mask wearing is mandatory. We understand if you are not able or comfortable to attend and welcome you to view the service virtually. Please find the link to the Mass on the funeral home website at <https://www.stjoseph-libertyville.org>.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Give Kids the World ([www.gktw.org](http://www.gktw.org)), the Trisomy 18 Foundation ([www.trisomy18.org](http://www.trisomy18.org)), and PADS Lake County ([www.padslakecounty.org](http://www.padslakecounty.org)).

Arrangements by Burnett-Dane Funeral Home in Libertyville. For info: 847-362-3009 or share a memory at [www.burnettdane.com](http://www.burnettdane.com).

Hank left his mark on all those who were lucky enough to know this great man. His wisdom, friendship and love make us all better. There is a saying that "a life well lived is a beautiful legacy." Long live the legacy of Charles "Hank" Salemi.

Roll Tide, Hank. Roll Tide.

A 'Celebration of Life' gathering will immediately follow the mass. The family will be visiting with friends and family from 12 – 3:00 pm at:

Independence Grove  
16400 W. Buckley Road  
Libertyville, IL 60048

Masking will be required and appreciated.

In lieu of a sit down luncheon, a boxed lunch to-go will be available for our guests.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

JAN 17. 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CT)

Independence Grove, Audubon Hall, Visitors Center  
16400 W. Buckley Road  
Libertyville, IL 60048  
[burnettdane@comcast.net](mailto:burnettdane@comcast.net)

# Tribute Wall



“ *Burnett-Dane Funeral Home created a Live Funeral Mass in memory of Hank Salemi*



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**Burnett-Dane Funeral Home** - January 13, 2022 at 05:40 PM

RW

*Being the biggest fan of Great America you always went out of your way to say hello. The rides you brought for us to enjoy are without equal.*

*I will miss you but know you will always look down on us playing.*

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**Ronald Witzek** - January 15, 2022 at 02:39 AM

GO

*What a blessing Hank was to so many! Hank has been a long time friend of mine since High School. His kindness, laughter and love for his family and friends is a gift I will always remember. I will forever be grateful for his friendship.*

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**Gail Nash Osborne** - January 17, 2022 at 12:53 PM

EB

“ *Kathleen, I am so very sorry for your loss. I am holding you and Claire in my prayers, hoping the memories and love you both shared with Hank bring you peace. Take care.*

*Emily (Sawers) Berlinghof*

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**Emily Berlinghof** - May 11, 2022 at 09:14 AM

BO

“ My condolences to the family and may God bless you all in this time of loss. I worked with Hank at Feld and then later filled his spot at Bill Elam's agency in Birmingham when he left. Ran into him once again when I worked at Turner & Warner Bros. He was always so helpful and kind. Only wish I had stayed better in touch so we could share more jokes together. A wonderful spirit and gentle soul. Roll Tide indeed.

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**Bob** - January 20, 2022 at 04:25 PM

SL

“ We are deeply saddened to hear of the loss of our long-time client and friend. Immediately our thoughts and prayers are with his wife and daughter and extended family, friends, and co-workers. Hank shared a passion for the amusement industry. We admired his strength as a leader as he successfully led Great America through tough financial times and recently through Covid challenges. Hank will be greatly missed.

*With Love, Everyone at Bleck & Bleck Architects*

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**Sheryl Linnemann** - January 19, 2022 at 04:01 PM

GL

“ Sending much love and strength to you Kathy and Claire and all of your family and friends.

*The Loika Family*

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**Greg Loika** - January 18, 2022 at 03:56 PM

RA

“ There are some people in this world that with their carisma and personality wins the hearts of everyone round them, that was my case with my dear friend Hank , I will miss him profoundly. My heart is with his beautiful wife and daughter. With respect Rene Aziz. Mexico City.

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**rene aziz** - January 17, 2022 at 08:18 PM



“ My favorite uncle...One of my earliest memories of you was going over to Granny's old house on Orange Circle and you taking me and Allison to City Stages! As the years went out especially in our teen years you were always trying to embarrass us! I remember the time you pulled up in tbe Buick in the Taco bell parking lot when us and all our friends were hanging out! Lol All in good fun of course. I have so many fond memories of trips out to eat, going to the movies and fun family dinners. Everytime you came to town you would always make it a point to get all the girls together. Family truly meant everything to you and that was obvious from the way you lived your day to day life. You will be so missed my favorite uncle. See you on the other side, Hank. 💜

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**Amy Crittenden** - January 17, 2022 at 07:45 PM

“ To the family of Hank Salemi:

*When my son Josh was 5 or 6 years old (7 or 8 years ago), he had a problem: His then favorite ride, The Condor was closed for repairs. Every time we went to the park we asked about the ride's status but couldn't get an answer. I suggested that he write a letter to the park. He told me, "Dad, I don't know how to spell or write a letter!" I told him to use brave spelling and to try his best. A letter full of misspelled words, fragment sentences, run-ons and barely legible letter looking things made its way to the mailbox, addressed to Hank.*

*Although I wish I made a copy of Josh's letter, he explained how his favorite ride was The Condor (and he loved riding it with me!) and he wanted to know why it was closed. He ended the letter by saying he liked fishing and asking if he could go fishing in the pond.*

*Not but a week later, Josh received a response from Hank. He explained that the Condor needed a part but it should be fixed soon (it was!). He also told Josh that he was happy that he had a hobby such as fishing, that all hobbies are worthwhile and he should always have one. He closed out the letter sorry to let him know that there aren't any fish in the pond.*

*He signed the letter, "Your friend, Hank."*

*He easily could've ignored the letter, but he didn't. He showed a little boy the power of writing a letter, and to always keep asking. To this day, I often think of his letter to Josh and have shared this story many times. I'm sorry that I never met him and never thanked him, but I will always cherish this.*

*On behalf of my entire family, we are extending you our most sincere and heartfelt sympathies during this time and will continue to keep you all in our thoughts and prayers.*

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**Kevin Wheeler** - January 17, 2022 at 04:28 PM

KK

“ *We will always remember Hank's warmth, humor, intelligence, and his hugs that made us feel that he was as happy to see us as we were to see him.*

*Our hearts go out to Kathleen and Claire, Barbara, Debra, and extended family. May Hank's memory be a blessing.*

*Love,  
Kristin and Tom Keramidas*

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**Kristin Keramidas** - January 17, 2022 at 12:21 PM



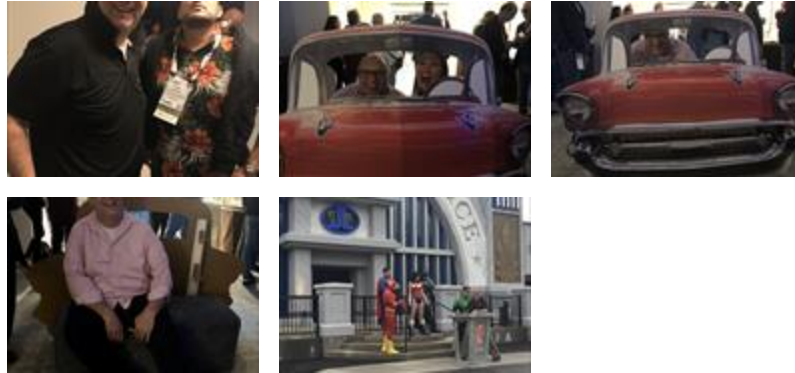
“ *We didn't know Hank that well, but every time we saw him out he made you feel like a dear old friend. Kathleen and Claire, our prayers and with you at this difficult time. I'm sure Hank's spirit will be with you every day, look for the signs. Sending our love and knowing that God will surround you with the support you need.*  
*Cindy & Kif Ward*

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**Cindy Ward** - January 17, 2022 at 11:24 AM

LW

“ 8 files added to the album Memories Album



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**Lauren Weaver** - January 17, 2022 at 11:20 AM

CC

“ *The news of Hank's passing was one of those very rare moments in my life that I will not ever forget. Kathy & I have known Hank for a long time thru the theme park industry and thru our mutual involvement with IAAPA. Hank was a gentle giant but when he spoke you listened as he was always spot on in his comments.*

*Hank represented Six Flags and IAAPA at the highest level. While at the same time he was always fun to be around and lived his life to the fullest.*

*I have heard the saying we are losing all the good ones...In this case we lost one of the Great Ones.*

*We are so sad and offer our emotional thoughts and prayers to his family. And hope that the very bright memories you have of this great man will help get you thru this dark time.*

*Chip & Kathy Cleary*

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**Chip Cleary** - January 17, 2022 at 10:57 AM

KT

“ I met Hank when he first moved to Libertyville. He was such a kind wonderful person. He was always kind and happy. I had not seen him in a couple years but enjoyed following his adventures in FB. I'm so sorry for your loss Kathleen and Claire. It is devastating to lose someone long before their time. RIP Hank!!

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**kevin terry** - January 17, 2022 at 10:18 AM

PE

“ I am so glad I had a chance to know Hank. He was a special person who will be sorely missed. I will keep your entire family in my prayers. Just know that Hank is never really gone from you. You will always carry him with you in your hearts and through your memories.



*Pat Edinger*

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**Patricia Edinger** - January 17, 2022 at 09:39 AM

JO

“ Hank would drive around the park and say hi to us as we planted the flowers in the park. He was very happy with me and said thank you many times because I jumped in by myself and fixed the outside of his office. You will be missed.

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**Josie** - January 16, 2022 at 05:01 PM

CO

“ I will always remember your smile, great sense of humor, and positive attitude. Grateful to have known you. RIP. Cory Moore

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**Cory** - January 14, 2022 at 09:11 PM



IH

*I first met Hank when he started as president at six flags .He was showing his daughter the park. He was so proud of his daughter. When I was retiring he wrote me a beautiful note.I will remember it forever. Thank you Hank!*

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**Irene Druce Hoffman** - January 17, 2022 at 12:54 PM

JC

“ *I met Hank at our old neighborhood bar and hangout in Chicago, the Nisei lounge. It's where he and Kathleen met. I remember he always had a smile and a ready laugh. And that soft, southern drawl. He, Joan and I shared a goofy "dead possum" inside joke that will always make me think of him. RIP, Hank*  

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**Juli Corcoran** - January 14, 2022 at 08:13 PM

JV

“ *I met Hank ay the laapa's Task Forcé bye invitación of Will Morey, and the O has the Nice opportunity yo share rxperiences and friendship with Hank at the Board of Directora. I'll keep.in mind his friendly embraces and Open mind and Will keep his memorias forever My deep condolencias for his family.*

*Julio VANEGAS, ICAE*

*Carruseles, Bogotá, Colombia*

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**Julio Vanegas** - January 14, 2022 at 12:02 PM

GC

“ *My husband sadly asked me to send his condolences. He retired his job, as a ride mechanic for Six Flags. My husband Joby, has many fond memories of Hank, and is grateful to have crossed life’s path with Hank.*

*No one can pretend to understand the pain you’re going through right now during this difficult time. We are so sorry to hear of Hanks passing.*

*Our sincere sympathy to you and your daughter.  
Mr and Mrs.Solomon “Joby” Counterman*

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**Georgianna Counterman** - January 14, 2022 at 12:49 AM

JH

“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



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**Jennifer Hutchins** - January 13, 2022 at 11:02 PM

JH

“ Kathleen and Claire,

*We are crushed and mourn the loss of your amazing husband and father.*

*We were blessed to know him and hear a story or two from the great story teller. Of course the porta potty incident stands out. What a sense a humor ! And you both know how kind he was to Maggie and I when we were flying into the city last minute and we thankfully ran into Hank on the train. He was able to recommend a restaurant to us near the theater. It was perfect. THEN - thankfully he was on our train home too because our cab never showed up at midnight. Your sweet husband and dad drove us home and we were so grateful. I know I would like more time with Hank and can only imagine how you feel. He was special and will be missed by many. Maggie has booked a flight home from Villanova on Sunday night and we will be there Monday to support you and honor Hank. We can't squeeze you tight enough !*

*Every memory is a beautiful tribute to those we love. Someone who touched the lives of so many will be remembered in wonderful ways.*

*Hugs, Jennifer Hutch Maggie & Kelly Hutchins*



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**Jennifer Hutchins** - January 13, 2022 at 10:55 PM