

Vito Eupollio Ragazzo
March 17, 1927 to February 13, 2017

Vito Eupollio Ragazzo passed away peacefully on February 13, 2017, just before his 90th birthday. He was born in the coal mining community of Aflex, Kentucky to parents who had emigrated from Italy. He spent his youth working in the coal mines and being educated across the Tug River in Williamson, West Virginia, where he excelled in football, basketball, and baseball. His athletic skill earned him a college scholarship at William & Mary where he starred on the football team, earned All-American honors, and broke the world record for receptions. He took a break from college to serve as a Sergeant in the United States Army during World War II and was stationed in Nuremberg, Germany. After receiving an honorable discharge from the military, he became the first in his family to graduate from college. After graduation, he played professional football in the Canadian Football League for the Hamilton Tiger Cats where his team won the Grey Cup. After his playing career, he began a long and distinguished career as a football coach, starting first at the high school level in Virginia, then going on to college coaching at Virginia Military Institute, University of North Carolina, Wake Forest University, East Carolina University, and Shippensburg University. His many coaching honors including NCAA Coach of the Year and induction into the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame. He was also a scout for the New England Patriots. He finished his working career at Virginia Tech as the director of student life, and retired in 1996 to Southport, North Carolina where he lived for many years playing golf virtually every day. He was married for sixty-four years to Betty Roberts Ragazzo who predeceased him by only a few months. He is survived by his two sisters, Sister Clare Ragazzo of Ohio and Adelaide Ragazzo Oliver of Kentucky. He and Betty are survived by two children, Jo Ann Ragazzo and Phil Ragazzo, both of Chapel Hill. Vito and Betty are also survived by six grandchildren and one great-grandson. Their "Fab Five" grandsons (in birth order) are Nicholas Woods, Michael Ragazzo, Russell Woods, Christopher Ragazzo, and Runyon Colie Woods, their granddaughter is Natalie Ragazzo, and their great-grandson is Orion Denison-Woods. As he was known to say, "if you can touch it, you can catch it," and that wise counsel applies not only to sports, but also to dreams and aspirations. His good humor, stories, generosity, and wise counsel will be missed greatly.