



## Daniel Henkel

December 10, 1951 - April 28, 2023

Dan Henkel, aged 71, of Indianapolis, Indiana, passed away on April 28, 2023, surrounded by loving family.

Daniel James Henkel was born to Richard and Margery Henkel on December 10, 1951, in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. He lived nearly all his life in Indianapolis. He was the fourth of seven children, exactly in the middle. Dan's family was known for their warmth, their involvement in community and church, and their musical and theatrical talent. Dan remained close with his siblings throughout his life.

Dan was brilliant, a self-taught classical guitarist, with a deep love of art, music, and laughter. After attending various colleges, he earned a Bachelor of Arts with High Distinction at IUPUI, majoring in Communication & Theatre. He continued his studies in public relations, crisis communications, media relations, and public administration.

In June 1981, he married the love of his life, Beth (Holland) Henkel. A devoted and adoring husband, his favorite verse for her was from the Book of Tobit: "He fell so deeply in love with her that he could no longer call his heart his own." They were inseparable for nearly 45 years. Dan and Beth traveled the country and the world together, enjoying yoga and beautiful birds in Costa Rica, gorgeous landscapes in Scotland and classical music in Austria.

Dan was a loving father to their three children, Sarah, Abby, and Tom. He celebrated each of them for who they were. He read stories with all the silly voices, tucked musical notes in their school lunches, and lulled them to sleep as he played classical guitar.

Everyone who knew Dan treasured him for his wit and his kind and gentle heart. He also had a way with words. He was always ready with a Dad joke or a clever pun, and he wrote many parody songs and original compositions, including “The Draft Dodger’s Rag,” “Down, Down with Protest,” and “The Lobbying Man.” His prowess for “Jeopardy!” was unmatched.

Dan’s professional career and accomplishments demonstrate his varied talents and dedication to musical arts, theater, educational institutions, the environment, and public service. He taught guitar lessons and music theory, founding Renaissance Studios in Broad Ripple in the 1970s with colleague Brett Terrell, and played professionally for several years before completing his bachelor’s degree. He went on to work in video production for the Indiana State Teachers’ Association, and served as Director of Public Information for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources where he was editor of Outdoor Indiana magazine.

Dan received numerous awards, including the Sagamore of the Wabash; the Maynard K. Hine Award by IUPUI; and Apex, Epic, Keystone, and Encore awards for crisis communications, op/ed writing, video productions, and musical arrangements. He was accredited by the Public Relations Society of America and served in various capacities in public relations at Shank Public Relations, Independent Colleges of Indiana, and the American College of Sports Medicine.

In the 1990s, Dan began officiating weddings, thereby celebrating love and

relationships. After retirement, his officiant business took off, leading Dan to officiate more than 100 weddings, often joined by Beth. As longtime allies and supporters of the LGBTQ community, Dan and Beth delighted in wedding couples of all genders and orientations. Dan had been proudly planning to co-officiate the wedding of his daughter Abby to her fiancée, Jess Roman, alongside Jess's mother on June 1, 2023.

Dedicated to giving back to his community, Dan served on the boards of several nonprofit organizations, including the Public Relations Society of America, the IUPUI School of Liberal Arts Alumni Board, the Portfolio, the Indianapolis Children's Choir, and the Indiana Parks Alliance.

Dan was an accomplished musician and taught classical and finger-style guitar lessons. He co-founded the Indy Folk Series with friend Janet McCabe. He performed with many dear friends and family, beginning alongside his sister Ellen Kingston as "The Henkel Brothers" in the 1970s. Beth and he served the Unitarian Universalist community in Indianapolis musically and spiritually for decades. He competed in the Indiana State Fingerstyle Guitar Festival in Nashville, Indiana. Dan also found his way to the stage with the Players Club. Dan's musicianship inspired a love of music in all three of his children, which he passionately encouraged and supported. Dan and Beth had just moved to Bloomington, Indiana, to be closer to their daughters and favorite (only) granddaughter, who misses her Poppy's funny jokes.

The world has lost a singular, wonderful man, although Dan's light lives on in the hundreds of friends who have come forward with stories about the ways he touched their lives.

Dan is survived by his loving wife, Beth Henkel; children, Sarah Montgomery (London), Abby Henkel (Jess Roman), and Thomas Henkel; granddaughter,

Hannah Montgomery; siblings, Amy Henkel (Ben McCracken), Ellen Kingston (Rick), Clare Henkel (Philip Sneed), John Henkel (Kathi Demarest); and many beloved cousins, nieces, and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, Richard Henkel and Margery (Laughlin) Henkel; brother David Selby Johnson; and sister Susan (Johnson) Hadler.

A celebration of life will be held at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Indianapolis (UUI) and on zoom (<https://tinyurl.com/9m2by3e2>) on Saturday, June 24, 2023 at 2:00 pm. Donations in Dan's memory may be made to UUI ([www.uui.org/support](http://www.uui.org/support)), the Indy Folk Series ([www.indyfolkseries.org/support](http://www.indyfolkseries.org/support)), and the Indiana Parks Alliance ([indianaparksalliance.org/donors](http://indianaparksalliance.org/donors)).

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

JUN **24**. 2:00 PM (ET)

Unitarian Universalist Church of Indianapolis  
615 W. 43rd Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46206

# Tribute Wall

BA

“ I am so incredibly sorry to learn of the passing of such a wonderful human being with a beautiful, artistic soul, a person of great compassion and wit, and on the occasions our paths crossed directly, a genuine joy to be around. The universe has lost a brilliant star.

Brent Auberry - July 06, 2023 at 04:54 PM

BH

“ Below is the zoom link to watch Dan Henkel's Celebration of Life this Saturday, June 24 at 2 pm Eastern. You're also welcome to join us in person at our longtime spiritual home, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Indianapolis.  
<https://tinyurl.com/9m2by3e2>

Beth Henkel - June 23, 2023 at 01:50 PM

DA

“ Dan has been a “family” member for many years. We cannot think of Dan without Beth, We have been a bubble family during the pandemic; shared food and wine every week; shared music and culture every week. We miss him, we celebrate his life; we celebrate Beth and her journey without Dan. He was a celebrant of life, living loving lives. We miss you, but will carry on with your giving as best we can. Hugs to you wherever you are.

Dawn - June 22, 2023 at 07:10 PM



“ A grove of 5 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Daniel Henkel.

June 22, 2023 at 06:59 PM

MY

“ While I have only known Dan since 2014 when I was inducted as a member of the Indiana Parks Alliance Board of Directors, I regarded him as a mentor, confidante and a friend. Dan and I shared so many thoughts and ideas as we worked together to advance the mission of the Indiana Parks Alliance. I so respected Dan's role as an officiant for wedding ceremonies of ALL who chose the solemn rite of matrimony. Dan was and will continue to be an inspirational figure in my life. Fond memories of times spent together are enduring.

Mark Young - June 20, 2023 at 07:30 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Daniel Henkel.

June 19, 2023 at 02:10 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Daniel Henkel.



June 19, 2023 at 02:10 PM

SK

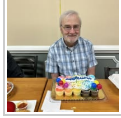
“ I am very sorry to hear of Dan's passing. Sue Figert Kennedy

Sue Kennedy - June 11, 2023 at 04:09 PM

BH

So glad to hear from you, Sue. ❤️ Beth

Beth Henkel - June 21, 2023 at 12:36 PM



*I remember Dan from our High school days at Brebeuf Jesuit. Our families were very close and we had many wonderful family gatherings with the Henkel family. I especially remember our epic ping pong games at the Henkels house! My sincerest condolences to Dan's family and loved ones.*

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**J Brian Cudlipp** - August 07, 2023 at 05:37 PM

BJ

“ *I was both shocked and saddened to learn of Dan's passing this week and a notion that will be forever difficult to grasp. Dan, who I first met in 1975, was both a friend and mentor. I do recall that first meeting and my memory notes that this was quite a unique individual!*

*I recently found his YouTube channel so, I'm grateful for that and of course, all the other memories and lessons. I had both the opportunity and pleasure of playing music with Dan perhaps a few hundred times. Indeed, Dan embodied an unparalleled wit coupled with a vast cause of caring for others – never to be forgotten. He was an artist to be sure.*

*To Beth and family, I wish to extend my deepest condolences.*

*Brian Johns*

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**Brian J Johns** - June 07, 2023 at 03:37 PM

CH

“ An unbearable loss for Dan’s loving family, and also for our community. He was living proof of the power of an active practice of consistent good and optimism. Dan articulately made the case, time and again, of the dignity and worth of every person he encountered, and stood for the rights of those he’d never even meet. His loss hurts even more as he’s particularly needed now. Love to Beth and the family.

Christina Hale - June 07, 2023 at 11:28 AM

PL

“ I remember Dan from his work with our Afghan refugee family. He and his wife Beth volunteered to be a part of the employment team and tackle the job of helping the family with finding work. He was eager to help. I also remember his performances and music at the UII where he played the guitar sometimes on Sunday. He will be missed. My deepest condolences to his family for this loss.

Poyan Lotfi - June 07, 2023 at 06:32 AM

KD

“ Dan and Beth together lit up a room when they entered. Dan was always ready with a smile and warm greeting. He will always play a part in our memories of our wonderful wedding in which he presided with joy and professionalism. He was a very good person.

We love you Beth and hold you dear always.

Kathy & Don Dewees - June 07, 2023 at 06:01 AM



NP

“ He was a delight and special in so many wonderful ways. I'm so sorry for your loss and his loss to a world that needs him so much.

Nancy Papas - June 06, 2023 at 10:51 PM



“ Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Daniel Henkel.



June 06, 2023 at 05:41 PM

CW

“ Dan and Beth quiet and beautifully made our community a much better place. Dan leaves a hole in our community but many thoughts of a life well lived. Carter Wolf

Carter Wolf - June 06, 2023 at 05:20 PM

KC

“ Dan was so very encouraging to Three Bean Salad when we were first starting out!! He hired us to play at a music festival at the Danville Unitarian Church, and the Unitarian Church here in town over by Butler where his Celebration of Life will be held. Dan was such a caring, loving, and gentle man, loved by all whose lives he touched-he will be sorely missed by so many. Prayers of peace and healing for you Beth, and all of Dan's family-RIPDH Dan...

kathy cancilla - June 06, 2023 at 04:49 PM



“ Dan was a great man and will be missed by all of us who knew him

Pat Pritchett - June 06, 2023 at 02:51 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Daniel Henkel.

June 06, 2023 at 11:14 AM



“ No better man. I deeply admired him.

**Gregory McDaniel** - June 06, 2023 at 10:39 AM



“ Ellen,  
My thoughts and prayers are with your family at this time.

**Kevin O'Day** - June 06, 2023 at 09:16 AM



“ I was so saddened to read of Dan's death in this mornings appear. His spirit inspired - a truly gentle man. I have observed the love between Dan and Beth over the years - what a loss for her and the children and all who knew him. I have another commitment on the 24th or I surly would have come to share and celebrate his life. Love to Beth and the family

**Carlie Anderson** - June 05, 2023 at 06:03 AM