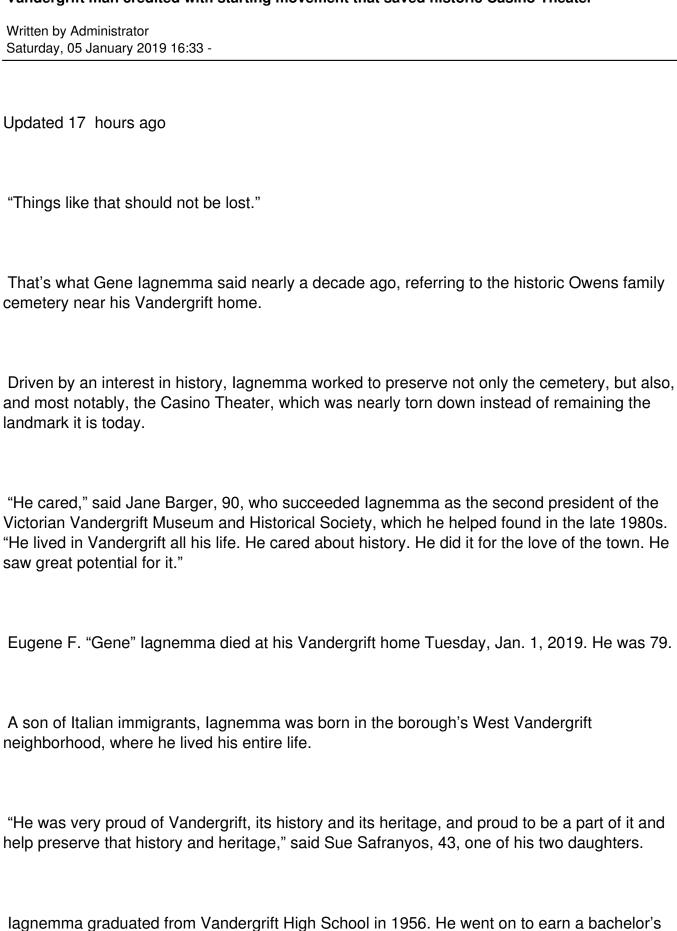
## Vandergrift man credited with starting movement that saved historic Casino Theater



degree in secondary education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, where he met his wife, Joan, to whom he was married for 55 years. He earned a master's in English and speech at the

University of Pittsburgh.

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Written by Administrator Saturday, 05 January 2019 16:33 -

He taught English and journalism at Kiski Area High School for 35 years before retiring in 1996. As the sponsor of the school newspaper, he'd spend many late nights there getting the paper ready, and talked the school into getting computers for the publication, Safranyos said.

"He was dedicated to whatever he did, whether it was his family, his teaching job, the town of Vandergrift or his church," she said, referring to St. Gertrude Roman Catholic Church, where her father was a life member and served as historian, parish council member and lector.

"He was very quiet and kind of laid back, but he always had a plan," she said. "He was always looking to improve things and help his community. He was just very involved and dedicated and passionate about anything he did."

Safranyos said her father got his interest in history and trivia from his parents.

"He wanted to learn so much about everything," she said.

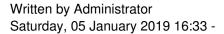
Barger, who now lives at Concordia Haven III in Winfield with her husband, Ken, said she and lagnemma faced many challenges saving the Casino Theater.

"It started a wonderful movement in Vandergrift to help revitalize the town," she said.

Anthony Ferrante, 77, current president of the historical society, said lagnemma will be honored with a plaque in the theater's lobby.

"He was very adamant in the fact that building had to be saved," Ferrante said. "There would not be a Casino Theater today if it wasn't for him. He started it. He's the one that kept telling us we had to do this. There's no doubt about it — he was the start that got everything going."

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Safranyos said she learned dedication and perseverance from her father.

"It was an uphill battle to save the Casino," she said. "There were many helpers along the way, of course. It would have been very easy for him to not start it at all, or give up. All these years later, it is still standing. It's a very important part of the town.

"He was very happy to be able to play a role in having that treasure for the town."

In addition to his wife and daughter, survivors include a son, Gene lagnemma of Vandergrift; another daughter, Linda Akins of Vandergrift; and four grandchildren.

Visitation was held Friday at the Brady-Curran Funeral Home and Cremation Services in Vandergrift. A Mass of Christian Burial was held at noon Saturday at St. Gertrude Roman Catholic Church in Vandergrift. Entombment was private at Greenwood Memorial Park in Lower Burrell.

Contributions in lagnemma's memory may be made to the Casino Theater, 145 Lincoln St., Vandergrift, 15690, or to St. Gertrude Roman Catholic Church.

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