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# Frederick G. Attea, 81, business attorney helped save Artpark from shutting down

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Artpark was in crisis in the mid-1990s.

New York State, caught in a budget squeeze, no longer wanted to run the arts and

entertainment mecca in Lewiston. There was talk of closing it down.

Up stepped Frederick G. Attea. A prominent Buffalo attorney who specialized in business and corporate matters, he was a board member and the spokesman for the volunteer fundraising group Artpark & Co. As chairman of the group after a shake-up in management, he guided a plan to take over programming for the venue in 1997 and straighten out its finances. Artpark stayed open.

"Last year was a shot at survival," Mr. Attea told Buffalo News feature writer Toni Ruberto in 1998. "It was a big shock to find out we had to take Artpark over or let it go by the board."

"When he undertook a cause he felt strongly about, he put all his talents into it," said David Murray, a partner at Phillips Lytle LLP who worked closely with Mr. Attea for 35 years. "He had this remarkably large network of friends and business contacts and he was almost a salesman. He would convince you, for all the right reasons, that this was a worthy cause."

A Clarence resident, Mr. Attea died unexpectedly April 10 in Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital, Amherst. He was 81.

Born in Buffalo, the older of two boys, he was a 1957 graduate of St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute. He earned a bachelor's degree from Canisius College, graduating magna cum laude in 1961, and a juris doctor degree cum laude from the Fordham University School of Law, where he was on the staff of the Law Review. He returned to Buffalo and

joined what was then the law firm of Phillips, Mahoney, Lytle, Yorkey & Letchworth. He described his work in an interview that appeared in the Corporate Counsel Business Journal in 2009:

"I have been in practice with Phillips Lytle for 45 years, and for 40 of those years I have focused on corporate work with an emphasis on mergers and acquisitions and securities law. We routinely assist Canadian and other foreign businesses in their U.S. activities. In recent years, I have worked closely with businesses in implementing and monitoring legal compliance and risk management programs."

"It's not enough to know the law and the right documents. You have to help the company get to the end point," Mr. Attea told Buffalo News business reporter Jonathan Epstein in 2010. "We look at ourselves as part of a management team and part of their success."

When Phillips Lytle reorganized in 2003, he was one of the six members of the newly created leadership council. He was instrumental in establishing the firm's relationship with LawExchange International – a network of independent law firms from around the world.

In recent years, his title was senior counsel. He continued working until his death.

"He was working hard," his colleague David Murray said. "He was probably constitutionally incapable of retirement. He worked incredible hours, but he proved you can do that and still be dedicated to your family. He had that devotion to the work ethic and devotion to the family."

A memorial tribute on the Phillips Lytle website noted: "Fred was a quick study and had a mind like a steel trap – able to assess the most complex transactions and identify dozens of scenarios that would ultimately lead to the greatest outcome for his clients. He could have easily led a team of the most elite attorneys in the nation, but he chose to leave his mark here in the Buffalo Niagara region." "He was the Number One

lawyer for a number of institutions," Murray said. "He did Marine Midland Bank and Pratt & Lambert before they were acquired by Sherwin-Williams, and so many others."

Mr. Attea often was recognized as one of the leading business lawyers in the nation. He wrote many articles and spoke on a variety of nonprofit and business law topics, ranging from business ethics to how to plan for succession in a family business.

He regularly was called to do presentations at what is now the University at Buffalo's School of Law and was an emeritus member of its Dean's Advisory Council. In appreciation, the law school gave him its Distinguished Alumni Award in 2007, even though he was not an alumnus.

The New York State Bar Association, which appointed him secretary of its business law section in 1993, presented him with the Dave S. Caplan Award for Meritorious Service in 2016.

At Canisius College, he served as a trustee and helped found its Center for Entrepreneurship. In 1999, he received the LaSalle Medal for outstanding service to Canisius, the highest honor given by the Canisius Alumni Association. He also was given the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2002 and the Magis Medal from Alpha Sigma Nu national Jesuit honor society at Canisius, to which he was inducted while he was a student.

As he had done at Artpark, he regularly provided his expertise to not-for-profit organizations.

In 2008, he joined the Governance Committee of the Board of Trustees of NativityMiguel, a Jesuit middle school on Buffalo's East Side. He bought equipment for the school's two campuses, raised funds and became personally involved with the students. He also was a trustee of Read to Succeed Buffalo, which is dedicated to improving childhood literacy.

The National Federation for Just Communities of Western New York honored him with a

Community Leader Award in 2018 for his work with nonprofit groups.

"He had this capacity for compassion and generosity," Murray said, "and it wasn't just on the institutional level. He made that happen in quiet, unassuming and anonymous ways. The people who he helped in that way, there are thousands."

A member of numerous committees supporting Catholic education, he regularly served in chairmanship roles for the annual Gambit dinner and fundraiser for Canisius High School. His alma mater, St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute, inducted him into its Signum Fidei (Sign of Faith) Society in 2006.

The Catholic Diocese of Buffalo also called on him to assist with financial matters. He was a member of the Bishop's Lay Advisory Board and was one of the first five members appointed to the Catholic Charities Foundation of Buffalo when it was founded.

During a financial reorganization in 2019, Bishop Richard J. Malone named him to the Diocesan Finance Council, which approves the budget for the diocese. Apostolic administrator Edward B. Scharfenberger appointed him to the Diocesan Renewal Task Force in 2020.

He was predeceased in 2014 by wife of 50 years, the former Judith Byrne, a religion teacher at Nardin Academy.

He was married in 2017 to Judith Czerwik Michael, a residential real estate agent with Hunt Real Estate and former owner of Snyder Fine Fabrics, after they were introduced by friends.

Survivors also include two daughters, Deirdre Attea and Rebecca Weimer; two sons, Frederick G. Jr. and Andrew; a step-daughter, Nicole Michael; and 15 grandchildren.

His brother Robert, who founded Life Storage, the fourth largest self-storage company in the nation, died in December.

A Mass of Christian Burial was offered in Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church, Clarence.