



Dr. Donald R. Eakin

September 28, 1944 - April 5, 2024

“Donny” the good altar boy observed Easter before passing away in the loving arms of his wife Silvana, this April 5th, 2024. Don was born on 28 Sept 1944 in Hell’s Kitchen, then grew up in the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Born to a Golden Gloves boxer, John James Eakin from Belfast, Ireland and a shrewd businesswoman, Kathryn Byrd Eakin, an Irish Catholic immigrant to Scranton, PA, his parents exemplified honest hard work and emulated their successful neighbors by investing in Don’s future through getting the best education. Don grew up a scrappy Irish immigrant’s kid to become a Dentist and career senior officer in the United States Navy, retiring as a Commander and continuing to practice dentistry well into retirement. As the first in his family to graduate from college, much less dental school, education meant everything to him. He attended St. Ignatius Loyola and then Xavier High School, a Catholic Jesuit college preparatory school that imbued in him a love of Latin and Greek history. Don attended Fordham University and New Jersey College of Medicine and Dentistry earning a DMD.

Jesuit priests inspired Don’s appreciation of Homer’s Ulysses, the tale of his epic journey home. When crossing the Straits of Messina, Don pointed out to his daughters the precarious escarpments of Scilla and Charybdis. With Homeric flair, we imagined ourselves aboard the Odyssey, lashed to the mast, cast in the pitches of its wine dark sea. A mundane ferry crossing became instead a heroic quest to rejoin one’s love and life and family.

Ultimately, isn’t our life’s purpose to return to one’s beloved wife and loyal

dog? To ever be worthy of such love and devotion?

Don enjoyed music, playing nightly on his baby grand piano for a solo performance or a rousing crowd. Singing along with the ivory keys gave him a resonant pleasure. He also played guitar and sang in a band with his buddy Tony DiFranco, an Italian and Irish duo that took the Catskills by storm. One evening while playing at Villa Vosilla, a lovely Croatian lady appeared. A few years later, Don and Silvana married, and identical twin daughters Larissa and Alessandra came along for the adventure.

Don joined the US Navy Dental Corps upon Dental School graduation with newborn twins in tow. Being an adventuresome family, the Eakins volunteered for every overseas tour they could. Stationed in Naples, Italy in the 1970s proved pivotal. Lifelong friendships with the Yearwoods' and Evans's endure and enrich to the present day. Don's buddies would race each other to work in their sports cars reminiscent of the Grand Prix. His helicopter pilot friends would hover over our villa in Marechiaro overlooking the Bay of Naples. What a life!

Next overseas jaunt outside of Tokyo, Japan in the 1980s proved to be a spectacular experience. Don's daughters were in high school then where they got to model with their All-American looks. Everyone in the family taught English. Don's English students were fellow medical professionals practicing in Japan. Learning hypnosis for pain management, and the virtues of a positive mental attitude, Don joined the speaker circuit, extolling its benefits for mental and physical health. He was an extraordinary public speaker, speech writer, and storyteller.

Being stationed in Sicily, Italy in the 1990s was the ultimate reward or punishment for any career Naval officer, depending on one's perspective. With Don's positive mental attitude, Sigonella was a blessing in every meaningful way. Ever more lifelong friends, amazing food and drink, caravan adventures with a Navy crew, sweet memories made of this great world.

Returning to The Odyssey, Don and Silvana's home in Aci Trezza overlooked the Ciclope (Cyclops) rocks. It was here that Ulysses and his men, hiding in

the caves, blinded the Cyclops in their attempt at escape. In his blind fury, the Cyclops heaved huge boulders at Ulysses to stop them and kill him. Those boulders thrown into the bay and the men's survival remain immortalized in time and landscape by their boldness, bravery, and beauty.

In the passing of Don and appreciating his life well lived and much loved, we are reminded again of Ulysses. Lauded in the words of Lord Alfred Tennyson, I imagine sitting on their deck at sunset, drinking a little too much port, and reciting my favorite lines:

"I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
... I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
... There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;

Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
... Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.”

Don is survived by his wife Silvana, daughters Larissa Eakin and Alessandra Zigan, and son-in-law David Zigan.

In lieu of flowers, should you desire, memorial contributions may be sent to www.nmcrs.org. Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society.

Tribute Wall

GR

“ I'm so sorry to hear of Dr Eakin's passing. I worked with him for several years at John's Creek dental. I was a dental hygienist there. I so enjoyed talking with him and listening to the great stories of his interesting life. He gave me some good investing advice too! Prayers for God's comfort for his family. Glenna Rendell

Glenna Rendell - April 15, 2025 at 10:36 AM

JW

“ CDR Eakins obituary described a life that is difficult to find. Having known Don for several decades, this is how I will remember him.
Jon waldron

Jonathan c Waldron - April 23, 2024 at 11:27 AM

KD

“ Thinking of the family and praying they find comfort.

Kathryn Devine - April 22, 2024 at 03:23 PM