



# Celebrating 60 Years of Don Brotherhood!

# 1962

*Once a Don, Always a Don*

## 60th Reunion Is Just 60 Days Away!

Just 10 “short” years ago, 117 of us gathered at NDHS, including 73 alums, 43 spouses and one renowned teacher, Mr. George Herman, to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our graduation. From the Far (far) West came Hawaii’s Jim Starshak gifting each of us with a shirt celebrating our football teams’ undefeated season in 1961. And from the Southeast came Miami’s Fr. Joe Landauer to celebrate Mass with Fr. Mike Geisler.

Not sure that we will be able to replicate that two-day reunion in October of 2012, but we’re going to give it our best shot on Friday,

Sept. 9, at the Hilton DoubleTree near Old Orchard Mall in Skokie. The evening program begins, as it did in 2012, with a Mass celebrated by our classmate, Fr. Joe Landauer, followed by a 6 p.m. reception, 7 p.m. dinner, and



a brief after-dinner program at 8 p.m., before we begin the real party.

Let’s gather once again to visit with classmates you haven’t seen for awhile and reflect on how

those years at Notre Dame influenced the decisions we made after graduation. And have some fun in the process. “Star” has graciously offered to repeat “giving the shirt off his back” again and Chairs Ray Neihengen and John Zei are

working on some NDHS swag for everyone. More importantly, it will be the memories we share that will make the evening special.

Already Tom Anderson, Steve Aufmuth, Denny Bielinski, Jim Blum, Bob Buonincontro, Bill Culkin, Larry Curtin, Ralph

DeLuga, Jim Devine, John Devona, Jerry Erbach, Jack Gerken, Bob Hanson, Terry Kiwala, Jerry Krueger, Chet Lafayette, Fr. Joe Landauer, Tom Mackey, Neihengen, John Nuccio, Marshall Olech, John Posch, Larry



Raymond, Bob Schwartz, Jim Starshak, Steve Steurer, and John Zei, and spouses, have registered for the 60<sup>th</sup> Reunion with many more expected in the next 2 months.

Please come and share 4 hours of a lifetime with us.

Contact info for Ray, John and myself is at the end of this newsletter.

## ***Stories In Their Own Words***

### **Jim Cullen, Lakewood Ranch, FL**

After NDHS, I went to Notre Dame studying civil engineering, but changed to Government and International Relations graduating in 1967. After ND, I went to Northwestern Law School graduating in early 1971.

After Northwestern, I went to work for the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) in Chicago and worked there until retiring in March 2003.

During this time, I lived in Harwood Heights and then Vernon Hills, and then, in 1996, in the then-new Central Station neighborhood west of Soldier Field, near Mayor Richard M. Daley. When I retired, I moved to Geneva IL.

I had a limited social life for a long time, as going to an all-male high school and college, and being an introvert, set me back in

developing my social life. This contributed to my making a foolish mistake in jumping into a marriage way too soon at age 38, which was corrected soon after by a divorce and an annulment. Then I was blessed to benefit by participating in the Catholic New Beginning ministry for divorced and widowed Catholics, which was a nurturing Catholic faith community.

During this time, I finally took a concrete to improve my limited social life by taking ballroom dance lessons. I had long wanted to dance, but never learned how. Taking dancing lessons worked almost immediately, as I was able to meet and develop friendships with women, both in dance nightclubs and in privately organized dance clubs. I expanded my lessons to include most of ballroom styles, plus Latin dancing, country and western, Argentine Tango and later West Coast Swing, which became my favorite.

One night in 1995 while dancing Argentine Tango at Rupert's 33 Club in Rolling Meadows, I saw a beautiful lady across the dance floor and proceeded to ask her to dance tango. We danced, we talked, gradually we became friends, we grew to love each other, and Linda became my wife in 1997. Ever since, she has been a great blessing from God.

Linda is a devout evangelical Protestant. She has a BS in Medical Technology and worked as a cut-tech in an Aurora medical lab. We don't have children, but



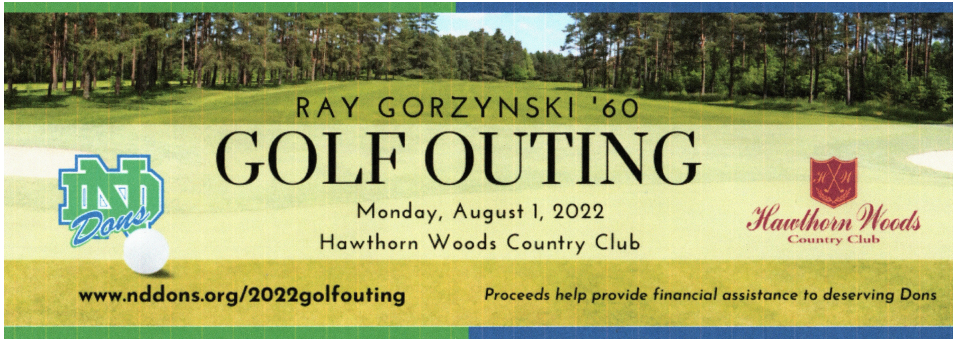
we share a love for cats whom we have adopted over the years. In 2016 she retired, so we decided to move to Florida for the great weather, lower taxes, and more freedom. We looked around and found Lakewood Ranch, a large master-planned community east of Bradenton, and moved here in July 2017. Our home is an hour south of Tampa and 40 minutes from the beaches and the bay of beautiful Sarasota.

We didn't know anybody in Florida, but we joined an evangelical church, 360 Church in Sarasota, and Our Lady of the Angels (OLA) Catholic Church in Lakewood Ranch, and started meeting friends and participating in ministries, such as The Knights of Columbus, bible study groups, adult education courses, and the Culture of Life ministry. I often see Dick Vitale at mass at OLA, as he lives in Lakewood Ranch.

We make an annual trip to Wisconsin to visit Linda's mother and brothers and my brother. We have also travelled to China, South America, and Europe

several times (Italy is our favorite, especially Rome), and every winter to our time share in Cancun.

We thank God for creating the free Sunshine State, where our life feels like a continuous Florida vacation.



## Golfing Raises \$500K+ for Scholarships

The annual Ray Gorzynski '60 Golf Outing is scheduled for August 1<sup>st</sup> at the beautiful Hawthorn Woods Country Club.

Representing the class of '62 will be Tom Anderson, Jim Blum, Larry Curtin, Larry Raymond and John Zei.

It's important to note, the revenue from this event comes mainly from the Sponsorship and the Silent Auction. The proceeds benefit the Alumni Association Scholarship Fund. Over the past 6 years, this event has produced more than \$500,000. Through the generosity of alumni and friends of NDCP, nearly 300 young men have benefited from these funds.

How can you help to ensure that we reach our goal and continue to

provide need-based scholarships to our deserving young Dons?

Become a SPONSOR. There are several levels of participation.

Donate one of the following AUCTION ITEMS: Country Club Foursome anywhere in the

country. Signed professional memorabilia (jerseys, helmets, balls, bats, et al).

Purchase a TRAVEL RAFFLE TICKET for your chance to win a golf trip to Arizona or California...Not a golfer? How about a weekend in New Orleans? Winner's choice of trip; airfare included. Only 150 tickets will be sold.

For more information on how you can participate, please contact Mary Beth Ficht at [mbficht@nddons.org](mailto:mbficht@nddons.org).

## In Passing:

### George Herman, R.I.P.

Jack: Our beloved English teacher passed into eternity this morning in Deerfield IL at the age of 95, As you recall he was at our 50th at ND High School. The best English teacher I ever had. I said Holy

Mass for him this morning. With a prayer for you and the class of '62, **Father Mike Giesler**

That was my first encounter with the passing of one of the finest teachers I (we) have ever known. I immediately phoned Fr. Mike who has been ministering at the Wespine Study Center in St. Louis since 1989 (you can read his great journey in the Fall 2021 issue).

Fr. Mike shared some of Herman's journey after NDHS. George & Gerry Herman had 9 children and teaching at a private HS, even as chair of the English department, made it difficult to feed the hungry. So in 1964, Herman left for Deerfield HS, then in 1974 to New Trier West where he chaired the English department, and lastly in 1980 to Northridge, the Opus Dei HS in Des Plaines.

One of his sons, Tom, followed him into teaching English. In fact, Tom has been a member of the Wespine Opus Dei community since 2017 while teaching English at Whitfield HS in St. Louis.

Here are some of the emails that I received this spring from members of the Class of '62...

No wiser, kinder man at NDHS. Thank you for sharing and saying mass for him. **Jack Gerken**

Jack and Father Mike: I totally agree. The best English teacher I ever had and a wonderful, sincere person with a twinkle in his eye. We were lucky to have known the man. **Patrick Kelly**

Sad news. I agree with Mike: he was the best English teacher I ever had, and I majored in English! When I was English chairman at McHenry and he was the chair at New Trier West, he invited me to be on the regional accreditation team for New Trier: what an honor and what an experience! Later, when the national English chair's conference was in Chicago, I arranged for a group of chairs from around the country to observe his work there and to have lunch with him. To a man (and woman, of course), they commented on his (and Mike has the right word here) wisdom. **Jim Blum**

RIP. Would not be who I am today without him. **Ray Neihengen**

As teenagers would say, "Totally!" **Jack Gerken**

Did not have the honor of being a student, but obviously knew, more aptly "felt", his influence then and through the years. Very nice that I had the chance to say hello at our earlier reunion. Understandable but regrettable that we don't appreciate the influence these men had on our lives until we reached the point where we're making life decisions for ourselves and family. **John Zei**

Definitely a teacher worth remembering R.I.P. **Richard Hamill**

Thanks, he was the best. **Bob Godek**

Jack, even though I was not a stellar scholar at ND, and I only had Mr. Herman for freshman English, he made an incredible impression on me and set an incredibly high bar for all the teachers that followed him.

At the 50th reunion, I had a great conversation with him about his career, why he had to leave NDHS, and his moves to Deerfield and ultimately New Trier where he was able to flourish personally and professionally. I will never forget that short time one on one with him. He really made freshman English unique. It was a privilege



to be in his class. **John Brennan**

Mr. Herman influenced me greatly. Never had much confidence in my reading but he took time coaching me. I became an English and Reading teacher and eventually a professional writer/ researcher. So, I tried to

pass on the favor and encourage others. **Stephen J Steurer, PhD**

Also the best English teacher I ever had--it was an honor and a great experience to be in his class--a scholar & a gentleman! **Jim Keefer**

Mr. Herman was the best of the best. A great teacher. A great individual. Always inspirational. **Pat Cain**

Jack: Praying for George Herman. Will do my best to make the 60th. **Fr. Joe Landauer**

Thanks for the Winter Newsletter...and for the note about the passion of "Mr. Herman." He was and is a role-model for me, in ways neither of us could have anticipated.

When I think of some of the antics he used to get us (as 9th graders) interested in Shakespeare I just smile. I can still see him directing the various groups he set up for reading Hamlet...and the way he could "control" a rather unwieldy group simply by waving his hand. When I recall all that, I smile.

Unamuno could have said of him, "y que hombre," for a better example of male spirituality could not be found. **Don Stevens**

Thanks for passing this along. He taught my freshman English class and was, by far, one of the best teachers I had during my four years at NDSH. After all, he was able to convince a thirteen-year-old "know-it-all" that Olde



Shakespearean English was cool. I sat and talked with him at our 50<sup>th</sup> reunion. He was still sharp as a tack! Requiescat in pace George Herman. **John Kelly**

Funny how coincidences happen. This past weekend I was walking and chatting with my wife. Somehow the topic changed to George Herman. I said how he was one of my best teachers. I remembered and we talked about Mr. Blue. Then the recurring assignment how we had to select unfamiliar words from our assigned readings. Each of us identified a few and looked up and wrote down their meanings. That year we developed a vocabulary.

**Larry Raymond**

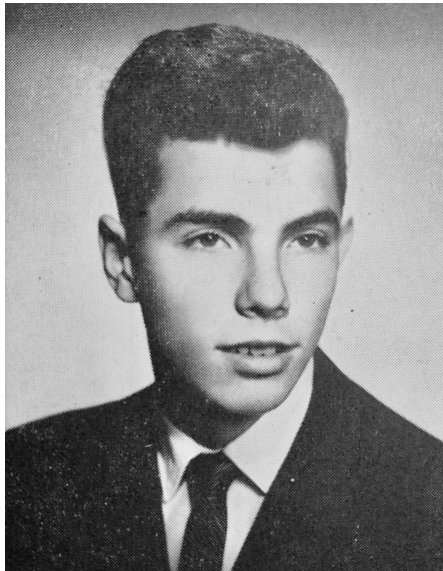
For me, not only the best English teacher, but the best of any teachers I ever had! He also helped me on my Catholic spiritual life journey. **Bob "Oz" Schwartz**

Mr. Herman was an inspiration to virtually all. His classes were challenging, informative and entertaining. His self-deprecating humor a true treasure. Great teachers are rare; Mr. Herman was certainly a great teacher and also a great human being. **Pat Cain**

**Leonard P. Belcore, R.I.P**

Over the past 15 years, I've made 100s of phone calls to members of the '62 Dons...in the early years trying to find most of the missing alums (down to 15 MIAs) ...then calls to solicit stories for your class newsletter (over 106 to date).

Most of those calls were great reunions and memories; but a few were filled with sorrow. One of the hardest to find and the one with the most angst was when I finally found Len Belcore, alone and dying of cancer in an apartment out by O'Hare. He didn't want to talk, so I simply said that we would continue to pray for peace for him. In April, I somehow learned that he may have passed, and I reached out to Steve Kelley, a friend of his from UND who confirmed his death. He recently got back to me with the following:



Jack, sorry about the delay in responding. I have spoken to Len Belcore's two oldest children. I did not realize it, but his final years of life were apparently (as you found out when you called him) not that great. He had cancer for many years which really took a toll on him both physically and mentally.

He left instructions with his children to call a small list of

people after he had died and inform them of his passing. He did not want any widely spread information about him, his life and his death. He will not even have an obituary published.

You are right about him founding and running a mental healthcare HMO-like organization for 9-10 years before the laws and the big companies made it impossible to continue. He was a practicing psychologist for many years at Stroger Cook County hospital. He did get his BA at ND in 1966, an MBA at ND in 1970, and his PhD at Illinois Institute of Technology in 1981.

I think that a simple mention of the fact that he passed (4/13/22 in Chicago) after a successful medical and business career and a long struggle with cancer would be a sufficient way to let the 1966 graduates know in the alumni magazine and still honor his wishes to pass with little fanfare.

He was a good friend to me and my family during my 31-year Air Force career and during the first years of my retirement in Florida. We lost contact about 12 years ago and now I know why.

I wish you the best always. Those were interesting times we were at ND. Much like today. But lots of wonderful memories to cherish.

Regards, Steve Kelley  
Brig. Gen. USAF (retired)

# **The Last Word**

*Wherever you stand, be the soul  
of the place.*                      **Rumi**

## **Jack Gerken**

Huntington Beach, CA  
714-968-5588  
Jack@Gerken.org

## **Ray Neihengen**

Arlington Hts., IL  
847-975-9118  
[rneihengen@msn.com](mailto:rneihengen@msn.com)

## **John Zei**

Barrington, IL  
847-713-2990  
johnjzei@gmail