



Michael Francis Zendan

March 27, 1941 - February 8, 2024

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Michael Francis Zendan, 82, longtime resident of West Hartford and Hartford, Conn., freed himself February 8, from the slow dimming grip of dementia and its robbery of his mind and movement. With his ever-bright spirit always untouched, he passed away peacefully at Saint Mary's Home, in West Hartford, surrounded by the love and prayers of all who supported him during his long battle.

The many visits, outings, calls, messages, and kind thoughts lifted him throughout dementia's thievery...those generous interactions...retelling of stories, looking at photos and recalling happy events, sharing meals and favorite foods...all banished the specter of dementia for a few happy minutes, and the Zendan Family cannot thank everyone enough.

A small, private Funeral Service was held February 17, with Internment at Mount Saint Benedict Cemetery in Bloomfield, immediately following. Family and friends will be invited to a joyful Celebration of Michael's Life at one of his favorite spots, Old Colony Beach in Old Lyme, anticipated to be scheduled in the later weeks of July 2024.

An avid reader, movie-goer, and television-show fan during various stages of this life, Michael (“Mike,” “Big M”) lived a life much like the stories he enjoyed on the pages and screens: engaging, vibrant, at times challenging, but rich in family and friends, and full of impact.

Prologue / Opening: New York

The story begins in Jackson Heights, Queens, New York, where Michael Francis Zendzian, the only child of Francis “Frank” Zendzian and Irene Lewandowski, was born. Frank, an engineer and bridge builder, changed the family name from Zendzian to Zendan for professional reasons.

Mike’s formative years were spent in New York City with frequent family visits to Zendzian and Lewandowski relatives in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Mike, like his father, loved math. A charming and handsome young man, he attended local schools and developed a cadre of neighborhood friends. After graduating high school, Mike attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (“RPI”) in Troy, New York, following in the engineering footsteps of his father.

RPI surprisingly lasted only a year. The freedom of college life in Troy and his energetic participation in the Delta Upsilon fraternity resulted in a request from the Dean of Students to return home and ponder his future.

Inciting Incident / Connecticut Chapter

Frank’s untimely death was an even bigger jolt to the family. Moving away from New York, Irene and Mike sought the solace of the Elmwood neighborhood of West Hartford, Connecticut and the support of Irene’s sister Euphemia, Euphemia’s husband Frank, and Euphemia’s and Frank’s daughter, Deborah. Intending to get back on track, Mike joined the Marine

Corps Reserve being the youngest enlisted service member in his Reserve unit and attended Hillyer College of the University of Hartford.

Little did Mike know that his life would once again take a twist when he met a beautiful, local, college co-ed at the University of Hartford who was studying to be a teacher. That local co-ed was Rosemary DiCorleto. She was smitten; he was enamored; and, their infatuation quickly grew to love. The two completed one another. Mike and Rosemary married in July 1962 and soon welcomed their first son, Michael Francis Zendan II. Michael II was followed 20 months later by his brother Christopher Nicholas Zendan.

The young family lived in a two-bedroom apartment on Woodland Street near the corner of Albany Avenue in Hartford and eventually moved to a two-family home on Ardmore Road in West Hartford, both owned by Rosemary's father. The family was full of love and the pursuit of knowledge, despite Mike having left the University of Hartford well before graduating. Mike cut his education short to work in insurance sales to support his family while Rosemary began a long and impactful career as an elementary school teacher in Hartford.

Mike and Rosemary sacrificed much to raise their two boys who attended private schools throughout their lives and went on to graduate from their respective institutions of higher education and pursue successful careers. Along the way, Mike coached youth basketball and coached and umpired youth baseball in West Hartford, enjoying the difference he could make in the lives of young people.

Turning Point / Empty Nest Chapter

Mike and Rosemary were such young parents that, after their sons Michael II and Christopher left the family nest, the new chapters before them opened a

seemingly new lifetime of opportunities.

During these chapters, Mike earned his bachelor's degree, pursued his master's degree, and instructed and tutored at Capital Community College in Hartford. Like Rosemary, Mike found his passion in teaching. Math was his forte, and many aspiring nurses learned the essential skill of calculating drug doses in his classes, where fractions were paramount, a zero was never an "o", and a decimal was never a "point." With a wealth of life experiences and an engaging teaching style, Mike became a mentor to many students, graduates, teachers, and administrators associated with Capital Community College over the years.

In the course of this period of his life, Mike, also like Rosemary, amassed a wonderfully eclectic, extended family that he loved...and they loved him right back. Part of that extended family were longtime dear friends Leo and Derrek, Carol, and Carol's lovely and caring family who considered Mike a Dad and an Abuelo. The love and support of this extended family along with his son Christopher and daughter-in-law Jackie allowed Mike to have an exceptional quality of life as dementia took its toll for some eight years after Rosemary passed.

Epilogue / Legacy

Mike lived his life as a New Yorker wherever he found himself. He was a connoisseur of hot dogs and ice cream by birth, a husband to Rosemary by fate, and impactful in the lives of others by choice.

Those who knew Mike will forever remember: his love of wearing shorts no matter the climate, his listening to oldies and international music; his pursuing odd collections from sports cards to Harley's to tattoos to art; his enjoyment of good food - Italian, Polish, Asian, seafood, and always hot dogs and ice

cream; his eagerness to always go for a drive or ride; his relaxing at Old Colony Beach; his involvement in youth basketball and baseball; his investment in teaching young people about math and so much more at Capital Community College; and his willingness to talk to anyone and everyone and share a smile and a story.

His impact on Michael II and Christopher was indelible—from private schools to athletics, from learning to swim at the YMCA to getting involved in Y-Guides as Little Bull, Big Bull, and “Full of Bull” (Mike’s own naming creation), from banning shy tendencies to embracing a love for learning—and behind every lesson was the importance of relationships.

Mike enjoyed being part of the broader Zendan, DiCorleto, and extended family he created...perhaps because he was an only child and perhaps because his own father died when he was young...but he loved the company of others. And yes, sometimes differences arose, or things were not smooth, but time and a true love of others healed wounds and mended rifts.

The lives that Mike touched include, but are not limited to: his son Christopher and Christopher’s’ wife Jackie; his son Michael II and Michael II’s wife JoAnn and their children Gabrielle, Andrew, and Michael III; extended family members Leo and Derrek, Carol, and Carol’s children and grandchildren; his cousin Deborah and her family; and of course his wife, the love of his life, Rosemary, and her three DiCorleto brothers (Francis, Nicholas Jr., and Anthony) and their families.

Mike was, at his core, someone who sought out, and enjoyed, opportunities to make a difference for others and help in any way he could.

He would be pleased with a donation to: The Capital Community College

Foundation at Capitol Community College, 950 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06103; or <https://www.capitalfoundationct.org/zendan> . All donations in Mike's honor will benefit Capital's student activities and services.

He also would be delighted simply with your offering of a helping hand to someone in need; baring a knee by wearing shorts, especially out of season; or, enjoying an ice cream or hot dog with a friend or youngster at any time.

Cemetery Details

Mount Saint Benedict

1 Cottage Grove Road
Bloomfield, CT

Tribute Wall

TJ

“*Condolences to Mike’s family. I enjoyed his banter and fun loving ways when we worked together at Capital Community College. Rest in the peace of the Lord Mike!*”

Tom Janik - April 11, 2024 at 10:01 PM

CZ

“*Happy Birthday Big M! Hope you’re sharing some cake 🍰 and ice cream 🍦 with Rosemary. We love and miss you! ❤️ Jackie & Christopher*”



Christopher Zendan - March 27, 2024 at 10:15 AM