

Donna Belanger – Eulogy by Richard

Where do we start? Donna and I grew up as children from two different towns that went to the same church but didn't know each other. We were in the same first communion class and the same confirmation class and still didn't know each other. When we started high school Donna's town didn't have a high school, so their high school freshmen class came to our town and that is where we met. We started dating in our junior year and got more serious in our senior year. After high school we broke up for about a year. I don't even remember why. After some persistence on my part, she decided to go on dates with me again - boy was I the lucky one! After a couple of years, we decided to take the leap and get married. Like many people our age - early twenties - we had no idea what the future would hold, but we felt we could make it happen together.

She started working in an insurance company and I was just starting my first real job. We bought a house - don't ask me how. The week our first daughter was born I was laid off from work but had found another job and started there the next week - and so it goes. We moved back to Donna's town and built a new house - a lot of hands on labor. We became members of the local Catholic Church and as usual got involved, Donna with the Ladies guild and me with the KofC. We were also charter members of the couples club that was started in the parish. This was really more of a family club because many of us had young families, and we planned several events each year that included all family members. This is where many lifelong bonds of friendship were formed, for both the adults and also for our children, that still exist to this day. As with all families, time marches on. Donna lost her Dad, Brother and Mother, I lost my Dad, and then my Mom just after we had moved to Pine Knoll Shores. Donna and I were fortunate to be able to provide her Hospice care in her last two months of life.

Moving to Pine Knoll Shores was the embodiment of those lifelong friendships. Seven couples from our couples club all moved to Pine Knoll Shores over the course of several years. At St Egbert we picked up where we left off - Donna with the Ladies Guild, and me with the KofC.

My life experiences have taught me, generally speaking, that if something needed to get done you make a plan, get some help, get it done and ask for forgiveness later (as long as it was not life threatening).

Donna's motto was somewhat different. This needs to get done and it's going to be done @ 110%. She was always usually quiet and liked working behind the scenes, but

the end product had to be the best she could make it no matter what the task or project. She took a lot of pride in giving her best.

When the PKS garden club decided to hang wreaths on all the street signs a few years ago she jumped all over that project. She liked making Christmas bows, and when we hung the wreaths on the street signs, she would sometime get up on the ladder herself if I didn't affix the bow just right.

Donna loved gardening, collecting shells and bird watching, and she always participated in the annual Audubon bird count. She was the "crafty lady" who could always come up with something to fit the need. She also took pride in calligraphy and practiced it every time she wrote a card or letter giving each that special touch.

Donna lived for her grandchildren, Bradyn and Lily. She would not agree to move to PKS until our first grandchild Bradyn was one year old – we ended up agreeing on two years old. Since we have lived here, we have traveled to Massachusetts at least four times each year to spend holidays, birthdays and other special times with them. Due to the National health emergency this year, we were not able to spend their birthday with them or go on our annual trip to Cape Cod during their spring break. She was not happy about this.

We have two signs hanging in our house that Donna found which speak volumes about her – "Friends are like seashells you pick up along the way" and "Bloom where you're planted". She lived her life to the fullest by those two sayings - making many close friendships wherever she lived, and blossoming to each occasion brought her way.

She often said to me during her diagnosis and treatments that if anything ever happened to her during any procedures, that it was OK. She felt she has had a wonderful full life.

I was blessed to have known her and shared a life together even though it was cut short. I believe we will be together again in paradise.love you honey!



A Tribute to Our Mom – by Jennifer and Melissa

Our Mom was both ordinary and extraordinary. Ordinary in the sense that she was your typical Mom- selfless, loving, supportive, compassionate, and dependable. However, our Mom had the ability to take these typical traits of a good mother and make them extraordinary. As children we never had any doubts about how much we were loved. Mom was always, always there!

Some of our favorite memories involve birthdays. First and foremost, there was the cake. Whatever we wanted, literally anything, she would create it! We had cakes complete with castles, roller skates, bumper cars, penguins, rock bands, the list is endless. Once we became old enough our parties were sleepovers, not just a couple of friends but a house full. She would make delicious homemade pizzas to feed the masses, and at night a dozen girls in sleeping bags lined our family room floor. She was also our biggest fan and cheerleader, and she attended every school event, play, and sports game. I can still hear her ringing her cow bell in celebration of a goal being scored during my soccer games.

Personal perspective changes with time, and it's too bad it takes us years of maturity to fully understand and appreciate all our parents give us. She was a great listener and would offer support and guidance whenever asked. I feel truly blessed and lucky for the time we were given. Our Mom meant the world to us, but it makes our hearts full to know the number of lives she has touched with her kind and generous spirit. We love you Mom, thank you for setting the example of how to become a kind, strong and beautiful woman and know that you will be with us always.

I could talk forever about how Mom could do anything and make things so beautiful. From our birthdays, showers and weddings, everything was perfect. But I want to tell a story that for some reason keeps coming back to me. I know you wouldn't believe it today, but back in my youth I was a cheerleader for our town rec football league for 6 years. In the early years just getting started, you could just sign up and be on the team. But as it got more popular, they started to have try outs to form a team because there were too many that wanted to join. Of course, I'm sure I and my Mom thought I was the best cheerleader on the squad. But one year during tryouts, I didn't make the team when the names were read. I'm sure I was devastated and probably crying. Mom, as the typical girl scout she was, had one of those Mom purses that held every imaginable item inside. She had already offered the judges the use of her calculator to add up the scores, but they had declined. Now in her typical calm and quiet way, she approached the judges and asked them to tally my score again using her calculator. Sure enough, they had made a mistake in their math, and my score was one of the top qualifying scores of the day. So, in the end, I was back on the squad with my friends right where I wanted to be. Mom's quiet ways didn't make her timid - she fought for me on that day, and probably so many others I don't even know about. We'll miss all those little special things every day, but you'll always be with us.