
DICK JENKINS

Member since 1998

Background:

Birth Date:

January 11, 1938

Place of Birth:

Point Marion, PA

Military Service:

Navy Hospital Corpsman

Did You Know?

Dick is a rosarian.

Dick and Sandy were married for 60 years. They met while Sandy was in nursing school, and Dick routinely hitchhiked from Penn State to see her on the weekends.

Favorite Hymn:

"Old Rugged Cross"

(Dick remembers playing this record over and over again on his grandparents' hand-crank victrola when he was a boy.)



I found my interview with Dick Jenkins to be an emotionally challenging experience. I was touched by the story of his love and sacrifice for his wife, Sandy, who died of ALS in the summer of 2020. His is a beautiful illustration of agape, that unconditional love that puts the the needs of the beloved above one's own. I couldn't help but think that so many of Dick's life experiences were preparation for the supreme act of love that he performed on Sandy's behalf.

While Dick had many ordinary childhood experiences—rollerskating and swimming, spending summers on his grandparents' farm, and attending yearly church camp—some of his experiences were unique. And they go a long way in explaining the person he became in later years.

Dick learned hard work from a young age, beginning his first paid job at the age of eight, where he worked at his uncle's dry-cleaning business emptying the contents of people's pockets. From there, he worked for the local newspaper and later at a job washing and waxing cars. After high school, Dick served in the Navy and then went on to work as a microbiologist, virologist, and project manager throughout a long and varied career for employers such as Ohio State

University, the National Institute of Health, the National Naval Medical Center, and the Department of Energy.

Of all of his many jobs, Dick most enjoyed his position in the clinical virology lab at Ohio State University. And he says that he liked being involved with patients, having always felt most purposeful when supporting and caring for others.

You see him doing this from a very early age. When asked about an experience that tested his faith, Dick recounts the death of his paternal grandmother who lived across the street from him as a kid. She passed away as the result of an aortic aneurysm when he was around 16 years old. It was a condition on which the doctors couldn't operate at the time. And it ultimately fell to Dick to ask the doctor to remove her from the IV keeping her alive, when his parents and aunts and uncles couldn't bring themselves to make the decision.

Not long afterward, Dick was called on to assist at the scene of a horrific accident, when a coal truck crashed into the local supermarket, hitting the cashier. Dick accompanied the woman to the hospital, attempting to slow the bleeding on the way. But he said her injuries were so severe, that there was little he could do.

As Dick walked through these challenging and formative experiences, he recalls having people in his life that supported him and taught him how to live well. He remembers the summers he spent with his maternal grandparents, driving his grandmother around town and working with his grandfather on the farm. He also remembers several Sunday school teachers who shared their experiences and helped to guide him on the right path in life.

Throughout a lifetime, Dick gained the strength and experience and compassion that was needed to make good on his greatest promise—that Sandy would die in her home rather than a nursing facility. He says that staying with her through the last weeks of her life was the hardest thing he has ever had to do.

Watching her struggle. Trying to ease her pain. Slipping into his bedroom at 11 o'clock to eat dinner, so that she wouldn't see him eating when she was suffering because she couldn't.

Dick loved Sandy through the end of her earthly life. And he continues to love her now through his grief.

His story reminds us all of something very important:

Love is not just something we feel; Love is something we do.