



## Joseph Gerald Harvey

May 19, 1932 - July 15, 2023

Joseph Gerald Harvey (May 19, 1932 to July 15, 2023) -

A Legendary Friend to All Will be Missed

When told of Joe Harvey's passing many people repeated the same phrases including "He was always there for us", "It's hard to believe he's gone since he was larger than life" and "I'll miss his sense of humor, his company and his stories". His legacy of faith, friendship, dedication to family and service to others and humor live on through his family and the countless friends he leaves behind. Joe would not want you to be sad at his passing but to remember the good times you shared with him and for you to reach out and continue to be there for others like he always was. He would also want all of us to fully enjoy and live life to the fullest and to have a good laugh and share a good story involving him.

Joe was born to Irish immigrant parents and lived a life honoring his Irish Catholic roots, family, Catholic faith and service to others. He also lived life every day as an extraordinary humor filled force of nature. He was the last surviving child of Patrick and Isabell Harvey who emigrated from County Donegal Ireland to Philadelphia in the early 1920's. He was predeceased by his siblings Mary Bygott, Frances Blessington, Patricia "Patsy" Rusko and James Harvey. He grew up in Port Richmond as a proud member of Nativity

parish where he honed his basketball skills at multiple playgrounds and eventually received a basketball scholarship to LaSalle College High School. He played on the same LaSalle Catholic League Championship basketball team with the great College and NBA star Tom Gola. Joe also played football at LaSalle where he suffered a severe concussion that eventually side lined his athletic pursuits.

At the height of the Korean War despite his football concussions causing the US Army to reject him he petitioned the Army for medical reconsideration over the course of a year and a half. He was finally admitted into the US Army on July 30, 1953, three days after the war ended. He was assigned to Pepperrell Air Force base in St. John's Newfoundland as an Army Surveyor. Joe's Army duties took him all over Newfoundland and Greenland. He often joked that he along with the Strategic Air Command protected America from invasion on the front lines of Newfoundland. He greatly enjoyed his two years in the military especially since his basketball skills were recognized and he was recruited for the base Air Force basketball team. His team flew to multiple Air Force bases to play basketball team was allowed to dine in the officers' mess which served much superior food and to Joe's delight great ice cream and desserts.

Upon returning home from the military Joe began working for Wanamaker's Department store as a truck driver. Wanamakers was then a twelve story wonderland Department store and Joe got to know almost all the employees from the suit salesman to the organ operator to the window dressers, elevator operators and waiters and waitresses in the Crystal tea room. He also got to know John Wanamaker who picked Joe to be his personal delivery driver. Whenever Mr. Wanamaker needed items delivered to or moved from his Chestnut Hill home or his vacation homes he called Joe. Mr. Wanamaker was such a fan of Joe that every year he gave Joe tickets to the Wanamaker family box at the Devon horse show. When Mr. Wanamaker bought new suits he would give his older suits to Joe. Joe enjoyed when attending family events

and church functions showing off the John Wanamaker monogrammed labels inside his Hickey Freeman John Wanamaker donated suits. Joe loved to tell stories of working alongside the Wanamaker's freight elevator where the store covertly brought in Hollywood Stars when they made appearances at the Wanamakers Grand Court to promote movie premiers. He regaled friends with stories of seeing and meeting John Wayne, Cary Grant, Lucille Ball, Gregory Peck and many more celebrities. Joe also loved the 8th Floor which was totally dedicated to toys including the monorail and toys and trains from all over the world. Joe loved to take his nieces and nephews and later his own children to this toy wonderland especially around Christmas. He also bought his kids all kinds of great toys from the 8th floor including large LGB German trains. Joe also upon seeing the Store throwing out a lot of food from Crystal Room Dinners and functions including fashion shows convinced store management to let him transport the leftover food to St. John's Hospice. Joe constantly entertained his family by bringing him discarded Wanamaker's displays including a Wanamaker's Halloween display that his kids used to set up a home Halloween haunted house.

Joe met his wife of sixty-five years and the love of his life Mary Bradley of Fairmount in 1956. Joe described his meeting Mary as the luckiest event of his life. Joe and Mary married in 1959 and soon thereafter moved to Juniata Park. Joe began working as a high school and college basketball referee where he worked with many referees who later became NBA referees including his life-long friend Joe Gushue. Joe was a lifetime college basketball fan but could not watch pro basketball without calling all the fouls and traveling that were not being called. Joe and Mary's son Pat was born in 1960. When Pat was two years old Joe was hospitalized with life threatening bleeding ulcers resulting in multiple life-threatening surgeries and long hospital stays which caused him to quit his developing referee career. Joe and Mary

welcomed their daughters Anne Marie in 1964 and Mary in 1965. Mary was born disabled and required lifetime care. Joe was a totally dedicated doting father to all of his children but especially to Mary. He worked countless hours of overtime to pay for Mary's medical care and to take her on many vacations including multiple trips to her favorite place, Disneyworld.

Joe was a man of deep faith going to Church daily most of his life and volunteering at Church. He was also a Captain of the North Catholic Retreat group for over fifty years where he grew the group at one point to over three hundred and fifty members. His group went to Malvern for years and then moved to beautiful beachfront retreats at San Alfonso by the Sea in Long Branch, New Jersey. Joe due to his church volunteering and retreat group work met many priests and nuns who admired his strong faith, work ethic and great personality.

When Wanamakers Department store was sold and the truck drivers were laid off Joe was recruited by Cardinal Krol's secretary to become the Cardinal's driver. Joe was a great fit for this job not only because of his faith but also because prior to Goggle maps and the iPhone Joe was the human precursor to both due to his photographic memory of all Philadelphia area streets and routes from his delivery driver experience. The job involved Joe moving his family into a house on the Cardinal's property and being on call for all of the Cardinal's driving needs. Joe stayed on as driver when Cardinal Krol retired and also drove for Cardinal Bevilacqua. He drove both Cardinals for over twelve years. Joe drove Cardinals from all over the world including Pope Benedict before he became Pope and met Presidents including President Reagan and President George H.W. Bush when they visited the Cardinal. Cardinal Krol who loved Joe invited Joe and his family to attend a Mass and private reception with President George Bush and Barbara Bush. Joe, who could talk to anyone, when introduced to the President proceeded to give the President lengthy advice on how to improve his campaign which the President

thanked him for. Joe was never sure if the president knew he was getting campaign advice from the Cardinal's chauffeur.

When Joe finally retired he and his family moved back into his wife Mary's childhood home in Fairmount. Joe customized the Fairmount house with a beautiful rooftop deck and unbelievably he ran large toy train tracks over the roof deck railings. He ran a rooftop railroad and had many parties and events on his deck. He quickly became the Mayor of Aspen Street by meeting and greeting all of his surrounding neighbors and everyone walking by the front bench where he set up camp outside his house. If anyone walking by complimented him on his Notre Dame wardrobe he would instantly invite that person in for a tour of his deck and home ending with a review of his photos with the ND football coaches and an invite to join Joe on one of his ND football trips.

Joe was deeply linked with his Irish heritage in multiple ways. He described himself as a Notre Dame subway alumnus and was an obsessive, dedicated Notre Dame fan who rented RVs and took groups of friends on epic drives to Notre Dame football games. As always in all facets of his life he befriended other Notre Dame superfans including Bill O'Leary and wound up meeting multiple Notre Dame coaches and players and somehow often came up with excellent seats and once was a guest on the Notre Dame sidelines and in the locker room. He ran his trips with military precision where lunches and snacks were packed and rest stops were timed under the command of 'General' Harvey who sped his group as quickly as possible out to his beloved Notre Dame. His Notre Dame fandom began in the 1930s when many fans inextricably linked their fandom to their Irish heritage.

Joe was deeply cognizant of the poverty and religious prejudice his parents fled from in Ireland,. He worked throughout his life with Irish charities and was a very strong supporter for Irish unification. He also deeply loved and was

loved by his Irish relatives and visited them and Ireland many times. He loved his Irish relatives including Raymond, Marie and Theresa Gillespie and was deeply moved when he was able to visit his father's birthplace, childhood home, school, and parish church in Ireland. He also loved Irish music and culture including the Clancy Brothers, Tommy Makem, Phil Coulter, the Irish Tenors and the Chieftains. He even once attended a Sinead O'Connor concert.

Joe was also an epic man of family. Family meant everything to him. Despite working a lot of hours he was always there for his wife and his kids, his daughter-in-law, his siblings, his nieces and nephews and his beloved grandkids Connor and Grace who he loved unconditionally. Somehow on a truck driver's and a chauffeur's salary he put his son through college and law school with no debt, paid for private school for his daughters and somehow met all of his disabled daughter's medical needs. He wound up retired with no savings but with kids and grandkids who loved him more than anything. He also despite the silly bitter family disputes of an extended Irish family always tried to repair disputes and family factions and reach out to all his siblings and nieces and nephews. Many of his nieces and nephews remember him as an epic, funny, warm, caring uncle who was always there for them and loved them deeply. He was a legendary father to his children and worked through the heartbreaking illness and 2002 death of his disabled daughter Mary by along with his wife Mary heroically caring for Mary at home during her long illness. His love for his grandchildren was boundless exemplified by his naming his rooftop railroad the Connor Patrick Harvey railroad and his constant over the top "encouragement" for Grace to become a rower.

Joe loved Christmas. Many of you were gifted with his tins of cookies which he purchased by the truckload. Many also remember his blinding Christmas light displays which were repeatedly featured on Action News and made the

Christmas Vacation movie light display look subdued.

Joe was also during all times of his life extremely funny with a quip, joke or myriad hilarious stories. Even when laid up during his final days he was joking with visitors and forcing guests and visitors to step on the talking scale he had near his bedside telling all visitors that he was weighing them on the way in and on the way out of the house to make sure that they did not steal anything. He was the master of many elaborate but good natured practical jokes that are too numerous to list here.

Joe was finally a lifelong friend and a legendary larger than life character. He made friends constantly throughout his life and continued to make friends up until the end. He would sit on the bench outside his Aspen Street home and greet, talk with and joke with everyone who walked by. He developed life -long friendships with neighbors, contractors, delivery people, people walking by and his doctors. His family doctor, Dr. Petrone, and his cardiac specialist, Dr. Weitz, were not only his trusted and caring medical doctors but also his great friends. Joe could talk to people with an open and empathetic heart and great humor where he connected with people because he loved them. He taught his son early on that all people have intrinsic value no matter their place or station in life. He took his eleven year old son out on delivery truck runs and pointed out how some delivery truck customers treated him like he was an anonymous servant. He told his son that it is always important to treat people as your friend even if they are an anonymous contractor or delivery person or a stranger walking by your house. Based upon his beliefs he greeted and gave the trash collectors Gatorade and made visiting delivery people feel like royalty where they were asked if they wanted a drink or a Tastycake or to use the facilities.

He also combined all of the above with positive action. He was always there for a ride, to comfort a friend, to help get someone a job, to take a collection

for someone who was laid off, to call you when you were ill or depressed, to come to countless funerals and wakes, and to stand by you and be your friend. He incredibly would call his son the lawyer and say I need you to talk to this guy who was walking by and needs help. He also would frequently pull up to bus stops in Fairmount and ask people where they were going and then tell them to hop in his car for a ride. He was that kind of big hearted guy and more, He was very religious but not pious. He lived his faith through good works. He helped and served others with a smile and made all feel good and loved.

There is now an empty spot where Joe Harvey sat on his Aspen Street bench. No longer will he greet you with a joke, quip or greeting but it is our job to now continue being there for others, reaching out to others and living life to the fullest just like he did. We will miss you Joe but you will live on whenever we tell one of your stories, a story or joke about you or reach out to others like you always did with caring, kindness, love and humor. Rest in Peace, Joe.

Relatives and friends are invited to his Funeral Mass at 11:00am on Friday, 7/21/2023 at the Cathedral Basilica of SS Peter and Paul (Main Church), 18th and Ben Franklin Parkway. The family will receive friends in church from 9:00am to 10:45am. Interment: SS Peter and Paul Cemetery, Springfield, PA.

# Tribute Wall

KR

“ Joe was the man to welcome me to aspen street out on the bench along side his wife Mary. He bought countless gifts, food and laughs to my family over the years. When I was pregnant with my second son, just one year ago he offered me a ride to the hospital when I went into labor, he he offered to take me on a practice run! He was always available to everyone. A legend for sure. You will be missed Joe, but never forgotten!

---

**kelly raven** - July 21, 2023 at 07:22 AM

RL

“ Something made me go to read this beautiful obituary about Mr. Harvey when I saw it in the Inquirer this morning. We lost our dear friend Bob Wilson who also graduated from LaSalle High School around the same time as Joe Harvey. Bob died last July 16th last year and embraced so many similar qualities of Joe Harvey. I hope these two remarkable men are enjoying each other's company in heaven. I loved reading this obituary as it was so uplifting.

---

**Rosemary Lynch** - July 19, 2023 at 10:14 AM

RJ

*I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Harvey through Dr. Petrone as his assistant. I enjoyed talking to him during his doctors visits. We would talk about our families and sports. I will miss those times. Dr. Petrone would have knock and walk in on us talking or else we would go on and on. Rest well sir with the angels....Renee Jones*

---

**Renee Jones** - July 20, 2023 at 01:24 AM

RS

“ Went to college with his son Pat. As freshmen we saw Pope St. John Paul II when he came to Phila. Mr. Harvey, whom we now mourn, encouraged us to go on retreats, first at Men of Malvern, later at San Alfonso in Long Branch, N.J. Mr. Harvey led the retreats with quiet eloquence, dignity, and above all as an outstanding example of how best to internalize and practice our Roman Catholic faith. I knew that Mr. Harvey was special then. Now I realize how extraordinary he was.

---

**Rick Di Stefano** - July 19, 2023 at 05:24 AM

PB

“ The Chieftain has passed. He was a real and natural leader. He lead us as small children, and then, til he went on to the next life. He will be missed. May God rest his soul.

---

**Pat Bygot** - July 18, 2023 at 11:29 PM

JB

“ Being a lifelong beneficiary of his kind and selfless acts,I will sorely miss him. Aunt Mary, Pat, Anne Marie, Kate, Conner,and Grace, my prayers and deepest condolences. Anything I can do just ask. Many people have an Uncle named Joe, not many are like my Uncle Joe

---

**Jack Bygott** - July 18, 2023 at 07:07 PM

MG

*What a legend Joe was. A very kindhearted, caring, giving, thoughtful, witty, energetic, handsome, honest, reliable and friendly man who practiced his religious beliefs more than one could imagine. And he passed all these beautiful qualities on to his family and anyone whom he met. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your exceptional kindness to us in our needs 39 years ago. A real guardian angel. Our lives have been enhanced enormously, having known you and all your family. Rest in Peace with your beloved daughter Mary. 🙏🙏🙏 From Marie Gillespie and family in Ireland.*

Marie Gillespie - July 19, 2023 at 04:20 AM

JM

*When Pope John Paul II said Mass at Logan Circle, Joe was in charge of the Holy Innocents parish marshalls. Joe and I spent the day together up near the front. That evening, I called him to tell him to turn on channel 12 which reran the entire day. Joe said that he would really like to see the Pope at the Cathedral Mass the next day, but only clergy were invited. My brother, Father Bill McGrath, was staying with us, and had an extra ticket. Joe did have a black suit. So the two of them went to the Mass. Joe must have looked suspicious. A policeman spoke to him. My brother Bill vouched for "Brother Joseph" and Joe saw the Pope's Mass inside the Cathedral. Joe later recruited me to Malvern with the North Catholic group, which he led even though he was an Explorer. My wife Kate and I visited the Harveys when he was driving the Cardinal and lived on City Line. If I get to Heaven, I'm sure Joe will be at the gate with Saint Peter checking my credentials.*

Joe McGrath - July 19, 2023 at 12:04 PM

JB

*Pat. Sorry to hear about your dad. Jack Blake*

jack blake - July 19, 2023 at 12:41 PM



*A major loss and one that must be hard for you.*

Richard Brown - July 19, 2023 at 04:59 PM

EO

*Two score years ago, the actor Jimmy Stewart, in his eulogy at a Memorial Mass in Southern California, for Princess Grace of Monaco (née Kelly of Philadelphia), said that each time he met her, was like being on 'holiday', such was her warmth of personality. Likewise, in being in Joe Harvey's presence, was, like being on 'holiday'. Thank you, Joe, for all your generosity & kindnesses, dear cousin. May Christ Jesus welcome your pilgrim soul into the Father's House in Paradise, with serenity & joy.*

*Joe Harvey's wife, Mary's grandaunt, Mary Brennan (Mrs Charles O'Donnell), was the aunt by marriage of The President of the University of Notre Dame, (Indiana), Reverend Father Charles Leo O'Donnell (1884-1934).*

*In remembering Joe Harvey, we recall the beautiful words of poetry, written by Fr Charles Leo O'Donnell, upon the death of his mother: 'Dear heart, in gardens of the ever fair/ Long summer of the saints/ I know you walk, unchanged, in a gentler air, /Where the breath of roses faints/ And, no eyes are happier than yours in Paradise'.*

*Our sympathy to his widow, Mary; to his daughter, Anne Marie; to his son, Patrick & his wife, Kate; to his grandchildren, Connor & Grace.*

*from*

*Eunan, Mary (née Harvey), Eddie, and Orla O'Donnell,  
County Donegal, Ireland*

---

**Eunan O'Donnell** - July 22, 2023 at 08:59 AM