

Donald J. Giesen

August 22, 1934 - January 23, 2024

Donald J. Giesen, 89, registered nurse, hospital administrator, deacon and author, died on Tuesday, January 23, 2024, at the Oscar G. Johnson V.A. Medical Center in Iron Mountain.

Don was born August 22, 1934, in Vulcan, MI, son of the late Harry and Ann (Zanon) Giesen. He graduated from Vulcan High School in 1952, Northern Michigan University in 1956, the Alexian Brothers School of Nursing in 1959, and Washington University St. Louis in 1964 with a master's degree in hospital administration. He served in the Army Nurse Corps and returned to the area in 1970. A year later he began his career at the Iron Mountain Veterans Administration Medical Center; he retired in 1994. Ordained a deacon in the Catholic Church in 1987, he was clerically removed by Most Rev. James Garland, Bishop of Marquette, following the publication of his first novel, *Settlement*, which deals with sex abuse in the Catholic Church. His second novel, *The Mushrooms of Autumn*, published under the pen name of Don Gardner, is a delightful romp through the dark side to show the redemption of God.

Don is survived by his good friend, Russ Kwarciany; a brother, LeRoy (Kaye) Giesen; and a sister, Elizabeth "Penny" (Charles) O'Donnell.

He is preceded in death by 2 sisters, Harriet Payne and Elaine (George)

Williams, and a brother, Gordon Giesen.

Private graveside services will be held at Norway Township Cemetery at a later date.

Condolences may be expressed to the family of Donald J.Giesen online at www.ernashfuneralhomes.com

The family has entrusted the Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home of Iron Mountain with the arrangements.

Cemetery Details

Norway Twp. Cemetery

Norway, MI

Tribute Wall

JS

“ As I prepare to attend the HD Metropolitan Opera broadcast my heart is so laden with sadness as my buddy Don will not be there to share our love for Opera. "Opera John" misses him so very much.



John Schweger - February 12, 2024 at 02:04 PM

WB

“ I forgot to mention that Don's sense of humor showed up in his writing under the pen name "Don Gardner", in that one of our classmates at Wash U. was one Don Gardner, now deceased, who Don Giesen nicknamed "Frank" because Gardner constantly started sentences with "Frankly this, frankly that....." So, Don Gardner became "Frank" and he thought it was funny, too. I ran into the real Don Gardner once in Dallas, called him "Frank' and he burst out laughing. Good memories.

William Burton - February 07, 2024 at 06:22 PM

WB

“ Sorry to learn that Don has gone on. He and I were classmates at the Washington University School of Medicine program in Hospital Administration in '62-'64. Don was a delight to learn with, often making all the other 14 of us in the class stop and ponder some wistful question he would come up with. His prior experience as a nurse helped orient us to the everyday realities of caring for patients, a welcome respite from the otherwise emphasis on organization, law, finance, etc. Later on, when I was a Navy Medical Service Corps officer at NAVHOSP Great Lakes ('66-'69) we would talk from time to time at AHA conventions in Chicago, and he hosted my wife and I to a nice meal in his Highland Park place. We both enjoyed Don and tried to keep up with his various goings-on over the years. Don was one of those who made a positive impression wherever he found himself. Well done, DonaldJ.

William R Burton - February 07, 2024 at 06:10 PM

RW

“ Don and I were graduates of Alexian Brothers Hospital School of Nursing in Chicago in 1959. During these past several years, we enjoyed remembering those years with our nursing classmates. We are now down to nine survivors but equally fond memories. Go in peace Don...

Roger Whiting - February 01, 2024 at 10:31 AM

D(

“ To the Family and Friends of Patriot Donald Gieson,
On behalf of the Army Nurse Corps Association (ANCA), please
accept our condolences and heartfelt appreciation for Donald’s
selfless service to the nursing profession, the Army Nurse Corps
and our Great Nation.

Once an Army Nurse, Always an Army Nurse.

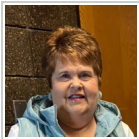
Our hearts and prayers are with you.

Sincerely,

Donna Smawley, AN, Maj (RET)

ANCA Region Director

Donna Smawley, AN, Maj (RET) - January 31, 2024 at 08:29 PM



“ I will surely miss our daily email chats. He was such a great friend
and a valued co-worker. I learned so much from him. RIP Don. My
deepest sympathy to Russ and Don’s family.

Judy Sielaff - January 29, 2024 at 08:57 PM

DZ

“ I grew up with my cousin Don at Vulcan High School (he was 4 yrs
ahead of me), and was an altar boy with him at St Barbara's
Church. He was influential in my decision to enter the seminary.
After Don moved back to the UP we would get together on
occasion. When I resigned from the priesthood, my wife Geri, and I
had dinner at his home on Lake Louise several times. He was a
kind man, generous with his quick wit and humor at social
occasions. My deep sympathy to Leroy and Penny.
(Rev) Donald Zanon

Don Zanon - January 28, 2024 at 05:00 PM

TG

“ I am so sad to learn that my dear friend, Don, permanently moved to God's House. I wish him everlasting happiness in his new home as he crochets, writes books, organizes opera get-togethers and tends God's garden.

I have fond memories of growing up near his family in the countryside of Vulcan (his sister, Penny, was my best friend), of friends gathering at his house and singing while he played the old upright piano, of riding the school bus, of tobogganing during the frigid winters until our mittens froze, of picking hundreds of bushels of beans and potatoes to earn spending money and a lifetime of friendship.

During adulthood, we became loyal email friends and emailed each other daily, sharing ideas and solutions to solve world problems. I enjoyed his knowledge, his humor and his stories. I always looked forward to spending time with Don and Russell at Lake Louise when I visited the Upper Peninsula, a ride in the pontoon boat, a glass of wine and a gourmet dinner.

I already miss his daily emails and caring advice. My love and prayers to Russell, Penny, LeRoy and family.

Toni Dinsmore (Lois Girardi) - January 28, 2024 at 03:29 PM

VC

“ We will miss you Don and fondly remember all our visits over the years. Valerie and Frank Callahan

Val Callahan - January 28, 2024 at 02:47 PM

VC

“ Valerie C. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Donald J. Giesen.

Valerie C. - January 28, 2024 at 02:44 PM

SS

“ *I will miss his smile, his great spirit and his way to make you feel you were his best friend. God needed another angel, bless you Don you will be missed here on earth.*

Sally Staelens - January 27, 2024 at 03:49 PM

MC

“ *DON'S PASSING MARKS THE END OF OVER 60 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP THAT WENT FROM HIGHLAND PARK TO NEW ORLEANS TO ATHELSTANE. WHAT MEMORIES THE YEARS GAVE US. I WISH HIM ETERNAL PEACE. MARY CAROL*

MARY CAROL - January 27, 2024 at 07:21 AM

JL

“Don was a very kind man and a very good friend to three generations of my family, especially with my late grandmother Violet.

Don had a vast array of friends and social contacts and enjoyed conversation, witty banter and a good joke.

He was an excellent crafter who was very skilled in crochet and lacemaking. His work is well regarded and treasured by many.

He loved Opera and was thrilled to attend various productions of Opera On Film showings at a cinema in Green Bay. He often referred to “Opera John” and the chats and stories they shared, which he so enjoyed.

Russell “being up to his armpits in baking delicious cakes”, hosting guests in his home, Bridge (cards) club, gardening, writing (his books as well as correspondence), the lake and the pontoon boat were some of life’s pleasures to him. Mostly, the love of his family and many dear friends was what gave Don happiness in his life.

Rest In Peace, Don. Love and Sympathy to Russ and to Don’s family and friends.

Jennifer Louko - January 27, 2024 at 06:43 AM

TG

“LeRoy, I grieve with you. Losing a brother to death hurts. Though your brother was older than mine, (42) I am sure you will miss him!
Tony Grudnoski

Tony Grudnoski - January 26, 2024 at 05:26 PM

CG

“ So very sad to hear about Don. He was a fellow employee and mentor at the VAMC. He was extremely knowledgeable and his kindness came through often in his great sense of humor. My sympathy to Russ and all of Don’s family. He will be missed by all. His contributions will never be forgotten.

Cynthia Gordon - January 26, 2024 at 08:24 AM

WW

“ William W. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Donald J. Giesen.

William W. - January 26, 2024 at 08:00 AM

JS

“ My dear, dear special friend, Don, brought such joy and happiness to my life as we shared so much of the finer things that life offers and especially his love for opera. But the real complete pleasure came from the times of just enjoying each other's company with our "kibbitzing" sessions. My heart goes out to Russell and the family of Donald.”



John Schweger - January 25, 2024 at 11:52 PM

ME

“ Don was the best neighbor! He always had something pleasant to say and we loved his sense of humor. He was thoughtful, helpful and generous with his bountiful garden. Our entire family will miss him. ❤️

Mary Kay Ehrhardt - January 25, 2024 at 08:05 PM

JN

“ Don did his last year of ministry training with us in Espanola, Ontario in 1985/86. So we have known him for 38 years and visited him and Russ every summer. He would email us almost every day. We shared our thoughts on religion, politics and whatever was going on in the world. He was a true friend and will be missed tremendously.

Our condolences to Don's family, Russ, and his many friends.

John Noble (Deacon Emeritus) and Carol Noble (Diocesan Order of Service)

John Melville Noble - January 25, 2024 at 12:12 PM