

Zehner Hoffman

One of my childhood Christmas memories is riding in the family car with my parents to see the ornaments hung over the streets in downtown Kansas City. I didn't know it then, but we could only add that annual experience to our Christmas celebrations because Zehner Hoffman hung up those decorations. He also hung awnings. He repaired rail cars. He worked for the railroad. He served our country with honors in the army during World War II. He grew up on this street. He was baptized over at St. Aloysius Church. His parents were married here. Zehner was proud of his career and his faith, but what he loved the most was being married to Judy. Zehner could tell you how many years he was alive, how many years he was married, and how many weeks since Judy died. 94, 68 and 81.

At this moment the remains of Judy and Zehner are reunited in this church in the presence of the family and friends whom they loved. Judy had a confident faith, too, and a strong devotion to her children. She was determined always to do the right thing, something she worked out deeply in her heart. Given the impact of her life on her family, I feel greatly honored that we at St. Anthony Catholic Church can receive her remains today, offer our thanks to God for her life, and pray for her, as she so often prayed for others.

Zehner loved Judy more than life, so death held no fear for him. He knew that there was a time appointed for everything, a time to be born and a time to die, a time of war, and a time of peace. The Book of Ecclesiastes says that God put the timeless into our hearts. We can never discover from beginning to end the work that God has done - even if we live 94 years. We get to enjoy part of it, and the rest of it, though we know it is there, is mystery. Zehner didn't know why it took him so long to die, but he did know why he lived - he lived for Judy, he lived for his kids, he lived for his country, and he lived for God. The extraordinary physical care he received at the end of his life, especially from Julie, Susan and Ellen, reflects the extraordinary care that he gave his family. People like this make an impact on a community, a city and a world.

Jesus promised rest for those who were weary. "Come to me," he said, "take my yoke and learn from me." Zehner carried many a burden: his final illness, the loss of his wife, war, and jobs that required work - hard work. People who work that hard need to rest. The best of them use their rest in order to go back to work again. Our prayer today is that Christ will offer Zehner the rest he deserved, the rest for which he longed, eternal rest, on streets of gold where someone else has hung up the lights. May Zehner and Judy both enjoy the fullness of love that Christ bestows on those who came to him, took his yoke, and learned from him. May they have eternal life.