

Mike McNamara Bio

I was actually born in Orlando on October 20, 1945. However, my Dad decided to go back to Notre Dame to finish his engineering degree after the war. So, we lived in temporary family housing called "Vetville" on the campus. Our pastor was a newly ordained priest, Father Theodore Hesburgh. So, my connection to Our Lady's university is almost genetic. Eight of my uncles also went there.

From there we returned to Indianapolis where Dad had grown up and spent the next 15 years as a professional engineer and businessman in the chemical and railroad business. My parents had 8 more kids, when they decided to move to Florida and start a new business [irrigation]. That was 1962. I didn't want to go; it was my senior year at one of the best Catholic high schools in Indiana, Cathedral H.S.; and our football team was the odds on favorite to repeat as State Champions. All my buddies and I couldn't wait for our senior year to cheer them on! I had also reconnected a few months earlier with a girl, with whom I'd gone to kindergarten. I wanted to stay!

My best pleading, cajoling, whining and salesmanship failed. I was sentenced to a new city, a new school and new people. Why me? In retrospect I realize that there are "two plans" ...mine and God's; and His are always better. It just didn't seem like that initially. Had I stayed in Indianapolis, I would never have met any of you, the great class of '63. All my brothers and sisters graduated from Bishop Moore. What a great school it has been for our family to be a part of.

So, it'll be great to see everyone who can make it to reunion, 50 years later. Reading everyone's bio's has brought me some laughs and tears. So, I hope I can do justice to the other outstanding bios. I apologize for the length; I can't write briefly either.

After Bishop Moore, of course, I had to get back north. Fortunately, Notre Dame took me and that kindergarten girl followed me a year later to St. Mary's, across the road. As some of you know, I did come back for Christmas break and during the summers, but never for very long and never by plane. I'd take a train, a bus, even hitchhiked once with some classmates from Sanford. I was totally afraid of flying. However, I had to take a 707 jet to Army ROTC summer camp in Kansas after my junior year. What an epiphany! I really enjoyed it. God's plans were working again.

When I got back to campus my senior year, the Colonel informed us that the U.S. Army had some slots for pre-flight training. If you passed the physical and aptitude test, they would pay you \$25/month to learn to fly, plus you would not have to march in the field in your uniform. About 60 hands went up, including mine. Fortunately, 40 hours of flight training later, some 2nd Lieutenant bars and an economics degree, I had steady employment for the next 6 years. This included a year in Vietnam [Distinguished Flying Cross], and 3 years in Germany with Susan [the kindergarten girl], after we married in 1968 in the log chapel at ND. Germany was unbelievable. No kids yet, a Captain on flight pay, late twenties and almost 4 Marks to the dollar...we lived the good life. We didn't know the meaning of struggle. We'd get that later, like everyone else. We skied the best slopes, traveled everywhere, drank excellent wine and German beer, and ate every kind of European food you can imagine. Pretty sure I gained 40 pounds.

Working for the "gubmint" for 6 years was a lesson in learning that it was enough. I was a democrat, but now just a conservative. I was a good qualified candidate for a pilot job at Delta. But, God had other

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plans. Delta wasn't hiring for 3 years, so after moving to Cincinnati, I went back and earned an MBA at U.C. Now it was time to live a real life with lots of ups and downs.

1976 was the year that was. We even got audited, because the IRS agent said it was impossible for one family to have all that happen, in only one year. Our first daughter was born in January; in March Susan, who was in grad school, too, started having abdominal pains. The doctors said it was just post-partum pain. In June [in the middle of finals], she could hardly sit, when a friend who's a doctor sent her immediately to a Kidney specialist. She went into surgery in July, lost the kidney and almost her life. Did I mention that I started a job as a brand manager in the food industry and bought a house in August, while all this was going on? What was I thinking? She had to sign the papers, while still in the ICU. At the closing the mortgage lender asked me if she was going to make it.

Fortunately, she made it, graduated as an LISW, and has practiced since then as a psychotherapist [specializing in family therapy, EFT and EMDR]. Be grateful if you don't know what those initials mean or need those services. But, if you do, she's the best. She's even got me half squared away...a lifetime job!

Our second daughter, Erin, was born in 1979 with some complications for Susan, so she was the last child. Fortunately, she traded up and married a guy who imports Italian and Spanish wines, plus olive oil into Colorado. She runs the website. We get to visit the grandkids twice a year. Tough life! Our first daughter, Shannon, also traded up and married an environmental engineer, trumpet player, amateur baseball player and Notre Dame fan from South Bend! She is the business development manager for a national food brokerage company. They provide us all the babysitting duties we can handle, as they live only 10 minutes away. We love it.

After 4 years in the food industry working 12-14 hour a day, I realized that I didn't love the business like many of my colleagues did. So, in 1980 it was back to aviation. Until 1995 I sold Beech airplanes and managed the operation in Cincinnati. Fortunately, my first sale was a new Beech Bonanza to Neil Armstrong, so I knew God must have me in the right profession. I also got to coach soccer, get involved in our neighborhood and watch the kids grow up and go away to college. Remember that quiet sound in the house? In 1995 I started my own aviation company to fly, buy and sell airplanes for people with more money than time, to use airplanes to better their lives, and I'm still doing it with the help of other pilots and industry professionals. I'll retire to that golf course in Florida someday.

I helped Notre Dame buy their first turbine powered plane in 1998 for which my Dad was very proud. However, he jokingly wanted some of the commission to repay tuition costs. Dad passed away in 2001. He'd attend Mass and received Holy Communion almost every day of his life. With 9 kids and a business to run in order to feed, clothe and educate us, I had a hard time understanding why he'd get up an hour earlier than he needed to attend Mass every day.

So, one Lent after he passed on, I decided to try it...just to see if I could find out what keep him going all those years. Fortunately, I found out. Now I wish I'd started earlier. It has led me down a different path than I would have chosen on my own. I became more involved in the Catholic Men's Fellowship movement, which started in Cincinnati and was president for 2 years. I became more involved in the local Notre Dame Club and run a fundraising golf outing every year with 3 other alums. I was also

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invited to join the St. Vincent De Paul Society about 5 years ago. I can only say, if you want to meet Jesus, just visit someone who is poor, unemployed and without a lot of hope [or so it might seem]. They don't have the distraction of things, like many of us. They have great faith and courage to ask for help. We are supposedly serving with hope, and although I'm convinced that we deliver some charity and hope, I walk away feeling that I was the one receiving the most. There go God's plans again.

After almost 22 years of marriage, Susan and I attended an experiential workshop called Life Stream Basic, since we didn't have anything else to do that weekend and thought we might learn something. God's plans were at work again. It changed our lives, our relationship and our direction. Without it and our faith, I don't know how we would have made it together for 45 wonderful years [20 for her, 20 for me and I'm not sure about the other 5]. Since we are both golfers, after the kids graduated from college, we decided to join a nearby club, which hosts a local U.S. Open qualifier every year, and we've even won the couples championship twice. Fortunately, she can putt! We've met some wonderful people there that remind us of the fun and friends we had when we were younger.

Other than that we are pretty boring people. We live in the same city and house we bought in 1976, still in the aviation business, still drive a 2002 white Lincoln Continental which has 150,000 miles and won't quit [so I can buy a new one] and I still love that kindergarten girl, who still looks like her high school picture; well she's the same height & weight anyway. I only wish she could make it to the reunion with me. You'd love her. But, she'll be in Colorado with the grandkids, and they'll say, "Where's grandpa?"

From our last Family Reunion at Treasure Island, FL...the real treasures of life:



Old Irish Curse...May those who love us, love us; and those that don't, May God turn their hearts.

If He cannot turn their hearts, May He turn their ankles. So that we may know they're coming by their limping!