

Obituary

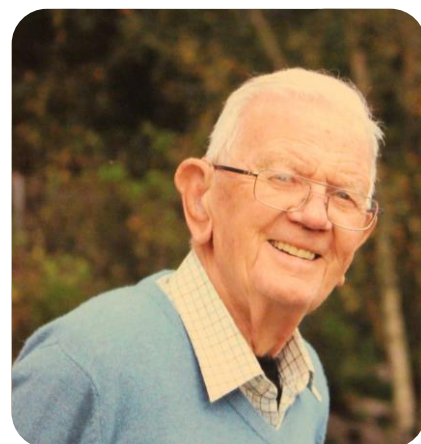
Denis C. O'Sullivan

M.B., B.Ch., FRCS, Consultant Urologist,
Cork 1963-1997

Born 25/02/1928 Listowel, Co Kerry

Qualified M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O (1st hon) 1953 University College Cork
FRCS, FRCSI
B.A (1st hon) 2004 Universtiy College Cork

Died 25/01/2019, Cork



Denis was born in Listowel, Co Kerry to Michael (a teacher) and Nora O'Sullivan (a nurse). He was the middle child of seven, five boys and two girls.

He attended St Michael's College, Listowel, his father's school, and later boarded at St Brendan's College, Killarney. At school he was a good footballer, playing for school teams and was also highly academic with a quick understanding and an excellent memory.

He entered UCC in 1946 to study for an Arts degree in Latin and Greek. He switched to Medicine a year later and graduated in 1953 with a first class Honours degree and first in the class. It was at UCC that he met Marie Goold, a medical student in the same class; they started dating after graduation and married in 1955.

Early on, Denis decided to become a surgeon. He trained in the UK and then moved to the USA in 1958 to specialise in Urology. He completed a 4 year residency in Urology at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota, U.S.A., a well recognised centre of excellence. Denis loved his time at the Mayo Clinic, and appreciated the rigour of the training programme and the expertise he gained there. He and Marie made many lifelong friends with other residents there and enjoyed exploring the Great Lakes and National Parks of the Midwest of America with their growing family.

After a brief time in Portland, Oregon, Denis returned to Ireland in 1963. He was the first specialist urologist in Munster. Denis started practice in the Bon Secours Hospital, Cork. Subsequently he established a urology service at St Finbarr's Hospital and moved with the acute services to what is now Cork University Hospital.

Denis brought Renal Dialysis to Cork in the 1960's. He developed a version of the prostatectomy operation (combined supra-pubic prostatectomy) that reduced blood loss and shortened hospital stay. He enjoyed teaching medical students and trainees. His patients appreciated his clear diagnosis and management which he conveyed with true kindness. He was demanding of high standards but combined this with real empathy for his team at work.

After his retirement from medicine, Denis returned to UCC to finish his degree in Latin and Greek. At 50 years it must be one of the longest “gap year”s granted by UCC! He graduated with a First Class Honours degree in 2004. During his studies he discovered a Latin document, the Zoilomastix; this was written in 1626 by one of his ancestors, Don Philip O’Sullivan Beare. Denis traced the document to the University of Uppsala, Sweden and then undertook the exacting task of translating the manuscript from Latin to English. This was a labour of love and was published in 2009 under the title, The Natural History of Ireland.

Denis had a great love of outdoor pursuits which he shared with all his family. Some of these interests stemmed from his childhood summers. He spent time at the sea in Ballybunion, Co Kerry as a child and became a highly proficient swimmer. He taught all 5 of his children to swim and surf from a very young age and to respect the sea.

Attending the annual race meeting in Listowel triggered his interest in race horses. He bred and raced horses with great interest and optimism. His most successful were Bobbawn and Golden Heart who won Point to Point races and under National Hunt Rules.

Whilst living in the USA Denis became a proficient shot; back in Ireland he loved shooting on crisp winter mornings and included each of his children in these outings, passing on his love of Irish wildlife and landscape to them.

In later years he took up golf, deriving great enjoyment from playing regularly with his golfing friends.

Throughout his retirement Denis followed with interest the activities and achievements of his 10 grandchildren. He loved family gatherings, and with his memory as acute as ever, he could recite all 15 verses of the poem, Cremation of Sam McGee with gusto.

Denis’s greatest achievement was his marriage to Marie; they were married 63 years and had a deep and loving relationship.

Denis is survived by his wife Marie, his children Michael, Fiona, Denis, Sean, Eamonn and his ten grandchildren, Michael, Eoin, Katie, Tim, Christopher, Ciara, Gregory, Anna, Aisling and Orla.

Author: Michael O’ Sullivan FRCSI, FRCSEd (Orth), Orthopaedic department, University Hospital Galway