

July 3, 2020 Eulogy for J. Ward Donovan, M.D. by Keith Burkhart

A loving family man, a dear friend, and a dedicated work colleague.

Let me start with Ward's work as that is what brought us together. Ward was a pioneer in emergency medicine and medical toxicology, a grandfather of the specialty in this country. Ward established the European model of bedside medical toxicology here in Hershey after his sabbatical year at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, Scotland. This experience with Dr. Alex Proudfoot Dr Laurie Prescott increased his passion for the bedside care of the critically poisoned patient. In the 1980s Ward's toxicology admitting service was one of just a handful of centers providing this care around the country and a primary reason for my choosing to join Ward following my training in Denver. It was 30 years ago when I completed that drive and the first stop on arrival was at Joan and Ward's for their summer pool party. This was one of many trips to Joan and Ward's for wonderful hospitality and fine dining.

The Penn State Poison Center and toxicology service that he created became one of the busiest in the country due to his dedication and stamina. As Joan can attest, Ward was on call more than every other night to cover this service for over 30 years at the Penn State Hershey Medical Center and then the PinnacleHealth System in Harrisburg, PA. Ward became a business manager to overcome the financial challenges to support the care of the poisoned patient. We both got to see the evolution of societal and professional attitudes change towards mental health and the now compassionate care of the suicidal and drug addicted patient.

Ward was a leader of our toxicology societies. He was on the Board of Directors for both The American Academy of Clinical Toxicology and The American College of Medical Toxicology. ACMT gave Ward its highest honor, the prestigious Ellenhorn Award. Ward's toxicology legacy continues in the many medical toxicology fellows that he mentored. The toxicology bedside service inspired medical students and emergency medicine residents to pursue and to establish new medical toxicology services and fellowships.

Ward's biggest legacy, however continues in the hearts and souls of his family and friends. Personally, Ward treated me almost like a younger brother. Quick story: I thought I was going to meet Ward for the first time in November of 1981. I came to interview for the Emergency Medicine Residency, but it was pheasant season and Ward was out in the field that day. He made it up to me, however, by the teaching me how to pheasant hunt, using his shotgun I now have, our last hunt together was this past February. Ward and I also loved to deer hunter. Deer hunting was especially cherished family time to him.

Another thing Ward taught me was an appreciation of Scotch whiskey. So today I will raise a glass to toast and celebrate Ward's life.

Thanks, Ward for your exceptional care of the poisoned patient and your leadership, but mostly the friendship and cherished memories you leave us all.

One final note about the tie I chose to wear today. I was looking at all the hunting ties and then the medical toxicology related ties. But it had to be an Irish tie that I purchased from Trinity College in Dublin. This tie is a photo from the Book of Kells, the oldest known Gospel book. Ward, rest in peace!