



## Joseph Michael Zito

March 13, 1927 - February 24, 2021

Joseph M. Zito, 93, of St Augustine, FL, passed away Feb 24th, 2021. He was born on March 13th, 1927, in a small mountain town in north central Sicily, but was left in 1928 to a stern grandfather and the loving care of his uncles and aunts. He completed the five year grammar school curriculum, four of which were in a one-room schoolhouse where one teacher taught four grades. His parents soon realized that their dream of a rich America had disappeared with the depression of 1929 and decided to sponsor his rejoining the family. Thus on Labor Day of 1938 Pino (Little Joe) gaped at the Statue of Liberty as he was coming into New York Harbor aboard the SS Vulcania.

Within days he was enrolled in the public schools and placed in the fifth grade due to his complete ignorance of the English language, though excelling in sciences, math, geography, and world history. Within one year he was in the top division of the seventh grade. But eager to earn an income, he dropped out of high school at the end of the second year to take menial work in several factories. Luckily he was rescued by a draft call that put him in the U.S. Army at age of 18. Discharged at the end of 1946 still with no education nor trade, he was again relegated to the bottom of the labor pile. That convinced him to resume high school while working the 3 to 11 shift in a factory, finally graduating in 1948 and going on to a degree in Mechanical Engineering from Yale University in 1952, concurrent with a commission as an artillery officer. With the Korean conflict underway, a stroke of luck sent him to Germany instead where he paid for that luck with severe hearing loss due to howitzer fire.

Back in civilian life he worked as a surveyor while waiting for long-range employment, finally going to Sikorsky helicopters for a 30-year career that involved extensive traveling, both foreign and domestic. The first 15 years were spent in various engineering capacities and the final 15 as Coordinator of International Licensing.

He shared the memories collected during his life, such as the mini tornadoes in Oklahoma, the sandstorm in New Mexico, the gory bullfights in Mexico, the heat and unsanitary conditions in Iran, the live lamb markets in Athens at Easter, being hurled at about 100mph by the last hydraulic catapult in the US Navy while sitting in the cabin of a Grumman S-2F plane, watching the frequent volcanic eruptions of Mt. Etna from a rooftop, the unrelated earthquake in nearby Catania, being swept off a low bridge while driving a

VW Karman Ghia during a raging flood in Sicily, the survival of a “simultaneous double engine failure” aided by pilot error while riding as a passenger in a Jolly Green Giant helo in Germany, and the friendly chat at the Paris Air Show with Igor Sikorsky, the humble genius of the aircraft industry. All this interspersed with numerous hangovers resulting from German celebrations.

His associations include memberships in the Knights of Columbus, the Lions’ Club, the Sikorsky Pistol Club, the Elm City Motorcycle Club, the Sons of Italy, and the Elks. For entertainment, he always relished the satisfaction of fixing practically anything. No matter where he lived, friends, neighbors, and relatives could rely on his knowledge of automotive, plumbing, electrical, garden equipment, etc. His Waterloo arrived with the advent of electronics; he let the next team take over when he retired in 1985.

Married twice - and divorced twice - he is survived by one daughter, Concetta of Port Charlotte, a son, Paul of St. Augustine, and two granddaughters. He is preceded in death by his grandson, Anthony G. Zito. He missed those of his good friends who left before him. His ashes are to be entombed with the old grandfather who raised him back in San Mauro Castelverde (Palermo Province).

In lieu of flowers or gifts, the family requests that a memory be shared here.

# Comments

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“ hi this is terri meoni or Theresa palermo as you will know me by. my mom was Frances p Palermo she was your dads first cousin. she lived with you grandparents and was married from there house, i remember going there when i was little and i was afraid of the stuffed bird on the stairs. i am so sorry about your dad i loved him he always said i was the only be who called him. . please call me 5163520284 ty

**terri meoni** - August 24 at 02:46 PM

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“ I was Joe’s neighbor for many years when he lived in Orange, Ct. Although my senior by 18 years we became friends. Joe introduced me to mechanics, hunting, riding motorcycles, snow mobiles and his version of spaghetti carbonara. We often engaged in escapades of ill merit as we fired off fireworks, his collection of cannons or launching salutes into the air tied to arrows. Our neighbors frequently warned their children to not follow in our footsteps. Joe was always there to offer advice when requested or to help me address a myriad of car or home maintenance issues. When I moved away and became more involved in my career, marriage and raising my daughters and he moved to Florida we unfortunately found it difficult to maintain consistent contact. That was my loss and now it is too late. I do miss him so. God bless you Joe, Rest In Peace  
Joe Crapanzano

**Joe Crapanzano** - July 03 at 04:05 PM



“ Joe! How wonderful to see this tribute from you! You two were great friends, and yes, two peas in a pod "engaged in escapades of ill merit". My dad was a rascal to the end, with that twinkle in his eyes. He was kind of tough as a father, but he gave me a rich heritage (including love for that spaghetti carbonara he usually wanted for special occasions). He LOVED helping people all his life, and it seemed there wasn't anything he couldn't fix! When we lost him, we lost one of a kind, a legend in his own time! I miss him TERRIBLY.  
Tina

**Concetta** - July 03 at 04:18 PM



“ Tina it is so good to hear from you and thank you for your kind words of appreciation. There are so many more laughable stories I could share like the time with drive to the Bronx to his uncle and aunt’s home to remove a sofa from their third floor apartment but it wouldn’t fit around the hallway corners. There was an excited conversation amongst the relatives in their Sicilian dialect, which I didn’t understand, until someone figured out that the sofa had come in via the living room window. So there are your dad and me jury rigging some ropes and pulleys and taking out the window to lower the sofa three stories down to the sidewalk. When Joe’s 80 something year old uncle who was left downstairs to “guard my car because we were in a tough neighborhood”, saw what we were doing he commented that’s how they got the sofa in too. Well we got the sofa down and secured to the roof of my car. I finally had a chance to ask your dad why we left an 80 year old who walked with a cane to guard my car in the middle of the Bronx Joe explained that previously some tried to break in to the apartment and Joe’s uncle chased him into the rooftop firing a pistol at him. From that time on everyone in the neighborhood respected him. Those Zitons are tough. I hope you, Charlie and Paul are all doing well. From the quick research I was able to do it looks like you kids have moved to Florida as well to be close to Joe in his final years. That must have given him great pleasure. God bless and stay well and please convey my condolences to your brothers for me

**Joe Crapanzano** - July 03 at 08:38 PM

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“ Joe was a great guy and a true friend. He was always there and he helped me start my business. He will be missed!! My sincere condolences to the family Ralph Madacsi



**RALPH MADACSI** - March 05 at 07:45 PM

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“ I spent many memorable moments with Padrino. Learned a lot from him. I will miss having the family together and spending time with you. Love always

**Monica Fagundo** - March 03 at 04:24 PM

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“ such a great man my friend for over 30 years he will be missed Bob & Lynn Catuto

**Robert Catuto** - March 02 at 11:08 AM



“ A wonderful man, his heart filled his chest, with love and kindness, he made me laugh constantly. I loved you Joe and you will be deeply missed. Faith Gilman Diaz

**Faith Gilman Diaz** - March 02 at 01:37 PM

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“ So sorry for the loss of an amazing man! Will cherish the time I spent in Saint Augustine in his home listening to his fascinating stories and sharing fun times with Paul and Concetta. Will miss his great smile and hearty laugh. TuTu.

**Vashti Goins** - March 02 at 07:13 AM



“ If there was anyone who put a smile on HIS face, it was you! You were one of his favorite people on earth! So glad you had one more visit with him via FaceTime a few months ago. I will always be thankful for all the happiness you brought into his life, and for letting him call you ("the original") TuTu!

And how we enjoyed the specialty Panettone you sent us!

**Concetta** - March 02 at 11:37 PM

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“ Sending thoughts and prayers for the family. What a fascinating life. I know he will be missed by many. Love from The Guido's



**Melissa Guido** - March 02 at 06:25 AM



“ This is so precious, Melissa. Thank you, my friends!

**Concetta** - March 02 at 11:39 PM



“ 7 files added to the album Memories Album



**yanire** - March 01 at 09:34 PM



“ The HUGE smiles on his face when he was with you speak volumes!

**Concetta** - March 02 at 11:40 PM



“ Padrino, I just want to thank you for being such an important mentor for my father. You were so wise, funny, charming and always full of stories. I'm so grateful to have spent time with you, learn from you and sing together. We will celebrate you always and think of you always padrino, famiglia sempre

**Marta Fagundo** - March 01 at 09:26 PM



“ This is your Godson the one that will always be grateful to you for being my mentor since I was a young man, I learned that hard work will always pay off and also that stability is the mother of success. Thank you for dedicating so much time teaching me new things ,for opening my eyes about finances, always showing me how to save a penny even when I thought it was impossible, you gave me support and hopes , you were and always will be a super special person in my life . I'm thankful to have had you for as long as I did THANK YOU PADRINO from the bottom of my heart.Until we meet again. Ciao

**Ace Fagundo** - March 01 at 08:58 PM

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“ Rosa Mercado lit a candle in memory of Joseph Michael Zito



**Rosa Mercado** - March 01 at 11:37 AM

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“ Concetta Zito is following this tribute.

**Concetta Zito** - February 27 at 07:42 PM

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“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



**Tussy Fitzgerald** - February 27 at 03:35 PM

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“ Your smile and your songs will forever be in my heart my dear friend Joe Zito. Thank you for being an important part of my life.



**Tussy Fitzgerald** - February 27 at 03:28 PM