

Dezil's Dispatch

Issue 011

Newsletter

Fall 2023

Dezil's Dispatch is sponsored by the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund.

A Dose of Dennis

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13

Told by Nerea M. Cal

The first time I met (or more accurately, saw) Dennis, he scared the crap out of me. I was an anxious little new cadet halfway through Beast at West Point, and Dennis was one of the upperclassmen serving as cadre for the second half of the summer training. He and some of the other upperclassmen were picking up all the new swimmers to go to our one hour of summer practice. We had gotten used to our old set of cadre and teammates and I don't think we were that nervous, until we saw one of the guys walking towards us with a ridiculous mohawk-like high and tight and a nasty scowl on his face. This guy was going to be my teammate?!

I was two years behind Dennis on the swim team and it didn't take long to figure out that Dennis's intimidating persona was all for show. His jokester personality quickly became apparent and he became one of my favorite upperclassmen. It's a good thing we got along, because we ended up spending a lot of time together those two years we overlapped at West Point. Not only did we swim the same events (butterfly), but I also got assigned to his academic year company (Go Bandits!).

Soon I got the distinct privilege of waking him up for morning practice every morning – apparently Dennis was NOT a morning person. We made many quiet, cold walks from MacArthur Barracks to Crandall Pool together, only to have to get in a pool and swim right next to each other. I looked up to Dennis; he's the closest thing I ever had to a big brother. Though he never missed an opportunity to tease me, I knew he was looking out for me. “Dezil,” as everyone else called him, was respected and liked in the company and on the team, and I have no doubt that if anyone messed with me, he would have given them an earful (and maybe more). He encouraged me, cheering for me at meets. He pushed me, urging me to keep up with him on kick sets. And, of course, he made everything fun. Maybe that's why I refused to call him “Dezil” – he was special to me.

One of my biggest regrets is that I didn't get to go to Dennis's graduation ceremony at West Point. Thankfully, I did get to see him just before, when he and Marie drove me to the airport after final exams. He was his regular goofy self and I'm sure I rolled my eyes while laughing at a dumb joke he made. How could I have known that would be the last time I saw him? When I sent him a graduation card a few weeks later, I never expected to hear back from him. He was getting ready to head to infantry training and Ranger School. But Dennis was thoughtful and kind, writing in his West Point stationary that he would miss his “little buddy.” Little did he know how much we would be missing him.

I'm grateful that I got to know Dennis, to share part of his short life on this earth. But I'm even more grateful for what Dennis has given me since he left his earthly home. Over the past seventeen years, Dennis has given me inspiration, motivation, and a second family. The memory of Dennis has sustained me through challenging times and helped remind me of what matters most – the relationships we build with others. Through Dennis's foundation, the Zilinskis have opened their hearts and their homes to anyone who knew Dennis, cared for him, or wants to honor his memory. They've welcomed me into their family, celebrating milestones in my life and career. And I've learned so much more about Dennis, his life, and what he meant to others through the work Marion and Dennis accomplish with the foundation. It gives me the sense that he's still here, watching over us, my big brother in heaven.





*If you'd like to share a short story about Dennis in an upcoming issue, please send us an email at runwithdennis@yahoo.com.

DONATE TO OUR FUND

Second Annual Westlake “Golf with Dennis” an Overwhelming Success!

Funds Raised for the Zilinski Memorial Fund Will Support Our Wounded Warriors



More than 280 people filled the clubhouse ballroom at the Westlake Golf and Country Club in Jackson on Monday, July 24, 2023, in support of the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund to raise proceeds to sponsor a service dog for a disabled veteran. It was the dinner and auction following the 2nd Annual Westlake “Golf with Dennis” during the day. The event was organized by Joe Panico and his family, and supported by committee members who volunteered to support the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund.

“I enjoy doing this for them because they are wonderful people and the work they do, nobody does the kind of work that they do, and I appreciate them very much,” said Joe Panico, resident of Westlake Golf and Country Club and event organizer.

“After going to the gala and meeting the Zilinskis and a disabled veteran, my dad – who is also a veteran – took the ball and ran with it,” said Jen Tapinis, Joe’s daughter and longtime Zilinski Memorial Fund supporter, who helped organize the event and personally wrapped 109 auction baskets with her mother for the event.

“So many thousands of veterans come home damaged, not well, with a sense of hopelessness. We are sponsoring a dog through the Zilinski Memorial Fund, and we’re saving lives, a veteran’s life, and the dog’s life. This is a homegrown endeavor to give veterans the support they need,” said Stephen Bianco, President, Westlake Veterans Club.

A wounded veteran, Michael Dowens, Petty Officer Second Class, USN, shared his story to the crowd, “You hear the statistic that 22 veterans with PTSD take their lives each day. Well, I was one of those 22 people, but I survived the attempt. I am grateful to have met Marion Zilinski and the people at the Zilinski Memorial Fund and applied for service dog. Here I am with Emery (service dog) now and I am a different person. I am three years sober and have a son and beautiful three-year-old daughter. To say my service dog saved me is an understatement.”

Students from CBA in Lincroft, Dennis’ alma mater, volunteered at the event, among them Anthony Tapinis of Colts Neck, Joe’s grandson, helped transport the auction baskets. “Seeing the smiles and everybody enjoying themselves, it really touched my heart and meant a lot to my grandfather.”

“It warms my heart to have so much support from the community we live in to assist our wounded veterans. Service dogs save lives, and we owe it to our men and women who return home – broken.

I cannot thank you all enough for your generosity and love... seeing this room filled to capacity is overwhelming and so very incredible. On behalf of the service members we assist and all of us at the Zilinski Memorial Fund, God bless you and thank you!" said Marion Zilinski, Dennis' Mother, and Co-Founder and Board Member of the Zilinski Memorial Fund.



**Our 15th Annual "A Toast to Dennis –
A Night of Remembrance"**



It was a night of remembrance, tears, laughs, dancing, and of course, camaraderie!

The 15th Annual “A Toast to Dennis - A Night of Remembrance” Gala was held at Eagle Oaks Country Club in Farmingdale, on Friday, September 8, 2023, to support veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and other life altering injuries, and their families. Funds raised will also support deployed servicemen and servicewomen throughout the year with supplies and goodies.

Special thanks to our Co-Chairs - Maj. Matthew Zilinski, US ARMY NG, and Joanne Trust, both board members of the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund, as well as the entire Gala Committee. We could not do this without you!

“Since 2006, when we started this fund, in honor of my brother, Dennis, our dedicated group of volunteers has helped raise more than \$1.6 million dollars!” said Matthew Zilinski at the podium as he served as Master of Ceremony. “We cannot thank our dedicated donors enough for their continued support of the fund and this event.”

Heartfelt appreciation also goes to The RockNRoll Chorus for performing at the gala, Especially for You Florist for donating the spectacular floral centerpieces, and Monmouth Computers for their continued support of all our technical needs.



Our 2023 Honorees: Vietnam Veterans

It was an honor to choose the Vietnam Veterans as our 2023 Honorees of the Year, as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the date the last combat troops left South Vietnam.

Marion Zilinski, Board Member and Co-Founder of the Zilinski Memorial Fund, asked Vietnam Veterans to come onto the dance floor as she announced them the 2023 Honorees. At first, the Vietnam Veterans were hesitant to come up... but then one Vietnam Veteran walked towards the podium. When that first warrior came forward, he was crying and said to Dennis Zilinski, who was also crying, "Welcome Home, Brother." Then, Marion again asked the entire room for Vietnam Veterans to come forward.

As you are aware, Vietnam Veterans will often not acknowledge that they served because of the negative treatment they received when they all came home. At last, a group of them did come forward, and there was not a dry eye in the room. Each Vietnam Veteran was presented with specific Challenge Coins by the Memorial Fund, which they were all gracious to receive. After that, all veterans and active military were asked to come forward. A poignant note is that they all went to the Vietnam Vets first and welcomed them home.

Special thanks to Chaplain Victor Hudson for offering a prayer for all our active duty servicemen and veterans, and many raised their hands to God during those special words.



Thank you, Circle BMW!



A GIANT thank you to Circle BMW in Eatontown for its long-time support and for the generous donation to our Memorial Fund.

This was the seventh year that Circle BMW selected the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund to be the recipient of a philanthropic donation based on the number of cars it sold during Memorial Day Weekend in honor of our fallen heroes.

Circle BMW Founder and President Tom DeFelice, Jr., said, "Lt. Zilinski made the ultimate sacrifice for America and his family has kept his memory alive by helping other military families, a selfless and admirable act of kindness. It is our honor to again make a charitable donation to the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund in support of the good work being done to assist our U.S. Armed Forces and their families."

NJ Run for the Fallen

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*Tribute to NJ's Military
Fallen and Their Families*



September 20th-24th, 2023

**225+Miles - Cape May to NJ Gold Star
Family Monument, Holmdel.**

Hero Marker # 457



LT Dennis W. Zilinski II
3:30 PM Sunday 9/24



The pouring rain did not halt this year's Run for the Fallen. Dedicated supporters, veterans, and families of the fallen ran more than 225 miles from September 20-24, 2023, from Cape May to the New Jersey Gold Star Family Monument in Holmdel. The annual run is in tribute to New Jersey's military fallen and their loved ones.

When they arrived at our Dennis' mile marker at Christian Brothers Academy in Lincroft, Dennis' alma mater, it seemed like the skies opened and poured even more rain on us. Perhaps it was our collective tears that dropped from above as we mourn the loss of Dennis 17 years ago. They were also greeted by the Bro. Frank Byrne and the Bag Pipes and Drummers from CBA.

Dennis' brother, Maj. Matthew Zilinski, US ARMY NG, once again ran in the tribute. Other members of the Zilinski family, including Dennis' other siblings, Doug Kenner and Michele Vaughn, embraced the crowd of runners at the stop.

We are all incredibly grateful for the support of our Gold Star Family community, it truly touches our hearts. Thank you to all who participated and to our Board Members, like Joanne Trust, and volunteers like, Paula Carolan, Donna Zabe, Jenn Tapinis, John Tapinis, Joe Panico, Debbie Panico and Bonnie Schuster, who come out year after year to honor Dennis and will never forget his sacrifice for our freedom.



Another SOLD OUT "Golf with Dennis"!



Crisp autumn weather and sunny skies made for perfect conditions for our annual "Golf with Dennis" at Pine Barrens Golf Club in Jackson on October 16th - which was sold out to golfers once again this year.

Dennis Zilinski, Dennis' father, welcomed the crowd with a heavy heart and beautiful words, "Your support of what we do does not go unnoticed. We are here today in honor of our son, Dennis, who paid the ultimate sacrifice. And, if we can make the lives better for wounded warriors and deployed service members, then we know he's looking down at us and smiling."

Combat Veteran and Zilinski Memorial Fund Board Member Dave Crenshaw also spoke to the crowd before they started on the course. "Make no mistake, I am standing here today, without any doubt, because of them." Dave turned around and motioned towards Dennis and Marion, Co-Founders of the Memorial Fund, with his service dog Doc, a black Labrador/German Short Hair Pointer mix, by his side.

"Golf with Dennis" raises money to help the Memorial Fund continue its mission to assist wounded warriors and deployed troops. We thank all our participants and sponsors for their continued support! Congratulations to our winners!



Run with Dennis

Applications are Out!



17th Annual Lt Dennis W. Zilinski II Memorial 3.5 Mile Run/2 Mile Walk

Sunday, November 5, 2023 (Rain or Shine)
PNC Bank Arts Center, Garden State Parkway, Exit 116
Vehicle access into the PNC Bank Arts Center will be closed starting at 9:45 AM for the duration of the race.
Scenic course with challenging hills through the Arts Center complex finishing at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

RUN WITH DENNIS



In honor and memory of Army Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski II. Lt. Zilinski was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, Company B of the 101st Airborne Division. Lt. Zilinski was deployed to Iraq where he was killed in action on November 19, 2005. Lt. Zilinski graduated from Christian Brothers Academy in 2000 and The United States Military Academy at West Point in 2004.

Schedule of Events:	*No registration or bib pick-up during ceremony*
7:45 AM - 8:45 AM	Day of the Run registration*
8:50 AM - 9:30 AM	Ceremony and Tribute to Dennis.
9:30 AM - 9:45 AM	Last minute registration*
10:00 AM - Start	3.5 Mile Run/2 Mile Walk
11:00 AM - Post Run	Reception -
Awards will be given to the top 3 women and the top 3 men finishers. Please remain after the race to receive your award.	

****Register online at RunWithDennis.org****

Early Registration (until 10/20/2023)	Adults \$30.00	18 and under \$15.00
Registration (after 10/20/2023-11/05/2023)	Adults \$35.00	18 and under \$20.00

Email your question to RunWithDennis@yahoo.com

T-Shirts are only guaranteed to those who register before 10/13/2023.

[PLEASE CHECK OUR WEBSITE](#)

RunWithDennis.org

[FOR EVENT UPDATES](#)

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

ALL MAILED ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY 10/25/2023

Last Name		First Name		Email Address	
Street Address		City		State	ZIP
Age on the DAY of the race	SEX (CIRCLE ONE) MALE FEMALE	EVENT ENTERED (CIRCLE ONE) 3.5 MILE RUN 2 MILE WALK			
Please circle any and all that you are currently or have been affiliated with					
SWIM TEAM:		CBA	WEST POINT	LAW ENFORCEMENT	US ARMED FORCES
ADULT SIZE T-SHIRTS (CIRCLE ONE)		SM	MED	LG	XL XXL
Proceeds to benefit the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski II Memorial Fund					
Please consider including a tax-deductible contribution in addition to your race fee. \$					
MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: Lt. DENNIS W. ZILINSKI II MEMORIAL FUND PO BOX 124, ADELPHI, NJ 07710					
<small>Waiver must be read and signed: I know that running/walking can be a potentially hazardous activity. I confirm that I am medically able and properly trained to participate in this event. I agree to abide by any decision of an event official relative to my participation in this event. I assume all risks associated with running/walking, including, but not limited to, falls, contact with other participants, the effects of weather, the conditions of the course surface and traffic on the course, all such risks being known and appreciated by me. Having read this waiver and knowing these facts, and in consideration of your acceptance of my entry, I, for myself and anyone entitled to act on my behalf, waive and release the Lt Dennis W Zilinski II Memorial Fund, all of its officers, staff, volunteers, agents, contractors and sponsors, their representatives and successors for all claims and liabilities of any kind arising out of my participation in this event. All fees are non-refundable</small>					
Signature (Participants under the age of 18 must have a parent/guardian sign the release.)				Date	

Check your mail and dust off those sneakers! The 17th Annual "Run with Dennis" 5K Run/Walk is on November 5th at PNC Bank Arts Center in Holmdel. We look forward to spending the day outdoors with crisp autumn weather and all of our supporters to honor veterans, deployed soldiers, and the fallen.

The rigor of the course at PNC is symbolic, and that's why we selected it. The steep incline up the hills is a reminder of the challenges faced by our veterans and military. The difficulty of the course gives runners added perspective of the sacrifices that are given for our freedom. We hope you can join us!

[Register Online NOW](#)



**Zilinski Memorial Fund Hosting a Bus for
Wreath Laying at West Point**



Volunteers with the Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund will again be helping to lay wreaths on the graves at Military Academy West Point Cemetery in West Point, New York, on December 2, 2023. It is an annual tradition for the Memorial Fund to take a bus full of volunteers from the Jersey Shore for this event, and we will be hosting a bus to go to the wreath laying again this year. As many of you know, our Dennis was a West Point grad, and it's where he is laid to rest.

Nicholas Codispoti, a CBA student, will be leading the efforts again. Last year, he raised enough funds to sponsor about 1,500 wreaths in Dennis' honor. The effort is part of his community service project for his scholarship through the Memorial Fund. Nicholas took over for his sister, Jordan Codispoti, a Trinity Hall High School graduate who now attends college, who led the wreath sponsorship campaign for us for several years.

Stay tuned for sign-ups for the bus on social media which will provide limited seating. If you're interested in sponsoring wreaths, click below

[Sponsor Wreaths Here](#)



Trees for Troops!



Members of the Zilinski Memorial Fund will also be attending the 20 th Annual “Trees for Troops” in Oceanside, Long Island, on Monday, December 4, 2023.

Through various donations, including one from our Memorial Fund, Dees Nursery provides a truck load of Christmas trees which are sent overseas to deployed troops each year. With a well-organized police escort, the trees are driven to JFK Airport followed by a caravan of cars. On the tarmac, our volunteers are among those who help carry the trees from the truck to a DHL plane.

DHL then flies the trees and other holiday decorations, including menorahs, to our troops in several countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. It’s one of our favorite days of the year!



Ways You Can Help!



Please consider buying "most needed items" from our list above. You can purchase them online from your favorite retail website and have them shipped directly to us at:

Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund
76 Crooked Stick Road
Jackson, NJ 08527

The Memorial Fund will cover the postage and box the items according to government protocol for overseas deliveries to our service members. Thank you for your help and support!

#RockYourFlag



Let's not forget to #RockYourFlag! Proudly hang our stars and stripes, take a picture, and post it. Be sure to use our hashtag #RockYourFlag and tag us!! Be LOUD AND PROUD!

Check Out Our Recent Media Links!

[The Journal](#)

[The Monmouth Journal](#)

[Military Breakfast at PECEC](#)

[News12 PSEG collection](#)

[Marion's Podcast](#)

[Zilinski BlueClaws video](#)

2023 Upcoming Events

Run with Dennis - November 5th
Wreaths across America - December 2nd

[DONATE NOW](#)

[VISIT OUR WEBSITE](#)

The Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski, II Memorial Fund is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law (Tax ID # 03-0601077).

Check us out on social media...



Lt. Dennis W. Zilinski II Memorial Fund | P.O. Box 124, Adelphia, NJ 07710

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