

## John Holliday Zentay obituary



John Holliday Zentay, 93, of Washington, D.C., died peacefully at home on Wednesday, April 8, 2026. He was a beloved husband, father, and grandfather. He was extraordinarily mentally astute until the end, consistently correcting his children on dates and names, and accurately describing the many important events he had witnessed in his long life. John's beloved wife of 56 years, Diana, passed away in 2020 after battling Alzheimer's for almost a decade. He was her dedicated caregiver during those years, which was an honor for his children and grandchildren to witness. For the last years of his life, John was lovingly cared for by Melda Saga and Arnele Quiamco.

John was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on June 9, 1932, the year he would often cite as the low point of the stock market during the Great Depression. He attended the Community School and the John Burroughs School in St. Louis, and then went to Harvard College, graduating in the Class of 1953. He was drafted for the Korean War, but the conflict ended while he was in basic training. Instead, he served as an Army private for two years in Germany. John returned to Boston to attend Harvard Law School and then moved to Washington, D.C. to pursue his lifelong ambition of becoming a Washington attorney. From the young age of 11, his hope was to work in Washington D.C. someday.

John's first job in Washington was working for Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri. He then worked in the Legislative Affairs Department for the United States Agency for International Development. His work as an oil and gas attorney began at Ginsberg, Feldman, and Bress, where he remained for many years before moving to become a partner at Verner, Liipfert, Bernhard, McPherson & Hand, which was eventually subsumed into DLA Piper. He loved his law practice and continued going into the office until the Covid pandemic, at which time he was 88 years old.

As much as John loved practicing law, his greatest joy was his family. He adored his wife Diana and his children Susan and Charles. He cherished his seven grandchildren and was very fortunate that they all lived nearby. For the last 22 years of his life, he saw one or more of his grandchildren each and every week. For many years, on Saturday mornings, he and Diana would host the grandchildren for trips to the zoo and local museums or let them play at the house. He also ensured that his grandchildren were educated in his great love of

musical theater, taking them to numerous productions at Arena Stage over the years. All seven of his grandchildren are gregarious conversationalists who love connecting with and learning from others, traits they inherited from both John and Diana. John had many lifelong close friends during his nine decades, including those from St. Louis, his tennis group, and his friends from Harvard "Q Entry." He and Diana vacationed often with many of these friends, and together the "Q Entry" group established a scholarship fund at Harvard.

John served on the Board of the National Archives Foundation for many years, as well as the Finance Committee of the National Cathedral. He was an enthusiastic tennis player who spent hours on the courts at St. Albans. He loved military history and talking politics, and he was an avid reader until the very end of his life. He also collected historical prints of Washington, D.C. and donated many prints from his large collection to the Lincoln Cottage, Mount Vernon, and Blair House.

John is survived by his daughter Susan Zentay (Adrian McAloon) and his son Charles Zentay (Amanda Nimmer) and seven grandchildren: Conor, Eamonn, Jamie, Finn, Emory, Grace, and Luke.

Memorial contributions in John's honor may be directed to the National Archives Foundation (<https://archivesfoundation.org>).

A service will be held at St. Albans Church on the Cathedral Close at 1 pm on Monday, May 18th with a reception following.

To plant trees in memory, please visit the [Sympathy Store](#).

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