



William J. O'Neil

July 24, 1943 - January 9, 2024

William J. O'Neil, 80, of Hadley, passed away surrounded by his family at the Cooley Dickinson Hospital on Tuesday, January 9, 2024. He was born in Cambridge, MA on July 24, 1943, to the late William H. and Mary E. (Blewitt) O'Neil.

Bill was a graduate of Watertown High School, class of 1961, followed by Williams College where he was an active member of the class of 1965. He attended Boston College Law School where he graduated in 1969.

He moved to Washington, DC and was one of the first employees of the newly formed Equal Opportunity Commission (EEOC). He returned to Massachusetts in 1971 where he set up a law practice in Arlington.

Next Bill was chosen as the Executive Director for Mental Health Legal Advisors for the Commonwealth. He then relocated to Western Massachusetts as a District Court administrator. He worked as an Assistant DA in Northampton for several years. Bill then entered into private practice which eventually became Jekanowski and O'Neil on Pleasant Street in Northampton. He often accepted cases and helped people regardless of their ability to pay. Bill later worked from home in Hadley.

He was a long-time member of the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence. He had a term as president of the Board of Trustees there in the 1990's. During his time of his first private law practice in Arlington, he had joined the Follen Unitarian Universalist Church in East Lexington.

Bill coached soccer and basketball when his kids were young and always took

an interest in games and the positive role that sports played in youth.

He is survived by his loving and devoted wife, Elizabeth (Rose) O'Neil, their sons, Kenneth of Chicopee, and Dennis of Hadley, and his close cousin Rev. James Hawker of Quincy.

Besides his parents, he was predeceased by his cousin Gary Hawker of Winchendon.

We would like to thank the dedicated and hardworking staff that cared for him at Linda Manor and CDH.

There will be a Celebration of Life on Saturday, February 24, 2024, at 1:30 PM at the Unitarian Society of Northampton, 220 Main St., Northampton.

DROZDAL FUNERAL HOME OF NORTHAMPTON has been entrusted with his services. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the Amherst Survival Center, or the Northampton Survival Center.

For more information or to leave the family a personal condolence, please visit Drozdalfuneralhome.com.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

FEB 24. 1:30 PM.

Unitarian Society Of Northampton

Tribute Wall

KM

“ I first met Bill as an employee of his law firm on Pleasant Street in Northampton. I remember him in his office, sitting among his files and books, pondering, pipe in hand, and would occasionally type for him. In doing so, I had a chance to see his intellect in writing, his insight into humans, and an amazing hand at fairness to all. But it was his ability at litigation which his colleagues stressed the most, all while being a good guy. Trustworthy to the core, he was among the best, both as a lawyer and as a friend.

Kathy McKeown - February 24, 2024 at 08:11 AM

BT

“ Beth, so sorry to hear about the passing of Bill. Was not aware of his health problems. May the Lord give you and your family everlasting peace and know that you are in our prayers. All our love & God bless you in your loss.

Bill Threewitts - February 20, 2024 at 09:59 AM

AG

“ So sorry for your loss. Bill was a good man and always had a funny story to share. He loved his family very much.

Ann Greene - February 12, 2024 at 07:27 AM

ES

“ My family moved to the United States from Ghana in 1987 when I was 7. By the Grace of God, Kenny O'Neil was the first friend I made and through him I got to know Bill. For a young boy new to the United States, the small things still stand out. I remember how much care Bill would take when feeding the cats. And it astounded me that Bill, the "man of the house", would make pancakes for breakfast whenever I slept over (they were delicious btw!). To this day, Bill is my ideal of what it means to be a good man and a good Father. I am thankful that I had a chance to know him.

Edward Safo - January 30, 2024 at 05:27 PM

SS

Very sad to miss our dear friend Bill. As father of our children's friends, he was very passionate and made sure that his the kids got what they needed, especially during sleepovers. And his wife, Beth, was no exception. The friendship of of the children was a catalyst for the Safo and O'Neal families and we enjoyed the bond that resulted. A very humane personality ever ready to share and assist in any way possible. May his gentle soul rest in perfect peace. From Steve & Margaret

Steve Safo - February 23, 2024 at 04:16 PM

ER

“ Bill was a wonderful professional colleague and good friend. His dedication to his clients was legendary. I am so very saddened to learn of his death; the world lost a kind, gentle and wonderfully witty soul. Looking forward to expressing condolences in person at his Celebration of Life.



Elaine Reall - January 29, 2024 at 11:54 AM

JL

“ *Bill was such a Professional and Gentleman always so polite to all. He helped our Town (Hatfield) over many years. It was always a pleasure to work with him. Just such a kind and wonderful Man. Our best to his Family.*

Joe Lavallee

Former Moderator

Hatfield

Joe Lavallee - January 29, 2024 at 08:24 AM