



William R. Polito "Bill"

May 8, 2024

Wednesday, May 8, 2024 at age 81. Predeceased by his parents, Jennie and Angelo; survived by his loving wife of 59 years, Kay; children, Stephen (JoAnn) Polito and Jason (Thekla) Polito; his beloved grandchildren, Jennifer, Brent, Miles, Riese and Clara; siblings, Andrea McLaughlin, Christopher (Lisa) Polito; brother-in-law, Kenneth (Alice) Erickson and many dear nieces, nephews, and friends.

An avid reader of any book he could find, Bill was an encyclopedia of quotes, ideas, and arcane trivia, which made him a formidable Jeopardy player and solver of crossword puzzles. Besides a strong mind, he also inherited a strong work ethic from his parents. Bill spent much of his youth working jobs ranging from gas station attendant to working for trucking companies loading and unloading freight. In 1960, he enrolled at Macalaster College in St Paul, MN, with the thought of becoming a lawyer. There he met the love of his life, Kay Erickson, who was working on an art degree.

After a whirlwind romance, the always adventurous couple eloped to Iowa and soon experienced one of their first joys, a son, Stephen. Bill and Kay decided to relocate to Rochester, NY to raise their family and start their new life including adding a second son, Jason. Bill took his deep knowledge of literature and became an English teacher at Gates Chili High School, where he worked for 30 years. During his teaching career, he earned many accolades, including Teacher of the Year, twice. His life was richer through the lifelong friends he made with many of his colleagues, and especially his

students, many of whom often came back to visit and thank him for his guidance and commitment to their learning.

Bill was also an incredible handyman and painter, both of which he spent time honing during summer academic breaks and for nearly 20 years after his retirement from teaching. His other loves included traveling, skiing, charter fishing, spending time with his family and his friends, and caring for his beloved animals.

Family and friends are invited to a memorial celebration of his life, Saturday, June 1st. Please feel to stop in and share a memory with family and friends anytime between 11 AM to 2 PM at Red Fedele's Brook House, 920 Elmridge Center Dr, Rochester, NY 14626.

In lieu of flowers, donations, in Bill's name, may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital or to Lollypop Farm.

Previous Events

Celebration

JUN 1. 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Red Fedele's Brook House
920 Elmridge Center Drive
Rochester, NY 14626

Tribute Wall

HK

“ I struggled in English class my whole life. I hated English class until Mr. Polito's class. The way he walked around the class room talking with such passion drew me in. I enjoyed it when we were reading novels in class. I struggled at times to complete my assignments by the due dates. I hated discussing the book when I hadn't. The discussions were my favorite part of class. It was the first time I looked forward to that kind of class. He was definitely in my group of favorite teachers. Mrs. Polito was definitely one of my favorite teachers too. Having both of them I could see why they were together. I have fond memories of both of them. They gave me a bit of courage and helped me believe in myself at a time where I was unsure. I have thought of them both from time to time.

Heather Kiessel - January 31 at 01:29 PM

J(

“ I am honored to have been a student in a couple of Mr. Polito's English classes prior to graduating in 1976. He was as witty as he was knowledgeable in his field. The GCHS district was indeed lucky to have had him for 30 years. Thank you, sir, for your dedication to the teaching profession.

Janene Fentress (Elder) - January 30 at 05:05 AM

DG

“ Mr. Polito was one my favorite teachers at Gates-Chili (class of 1977). His classes were always so interesting. He put so much time and thought into his lessons. His Short Stories class was unforgettable. Loved his sense of humor. I am sorry for your loss. Rest easy Bill.

Debra Gross - June 03, 2024 at 11:22 PM

DG

“ Mr. Polito was a very "cool" teacher in 1972. He brought out the best in students. All the praise is well deserved for his brilliance and role modeling as an outstanding teacher. Thanks for the great foundation you poured for so many. RIP Dr. Clark Godshall, Class of 1972, Senior NY State BOCES Superintendent-Medina, NY

Dr. Clark Godshall - May 28, 2024 at 11:13 AM

YJ

“ Your loving friends, Tom & Cathy Jones planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of William R. Polito "Bill".

Your loving friends, Tom & Cathy Jones - May 18, 2024 at 11:32 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of William R. Polito "Bill".

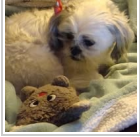


May 18, 2024 at 11:32 AM



“ I always enjoyed going over and eating dinner with Bill when visiting. He always had amazing stories to tell and time would flyby! The common theme among others that knew him is how much of a positive effect they had on their lives. We are lucky to have been able to call Bill one of our friends. All the Conroys in Ohio will greatly miss him. Thanks for the wonderful memories sincerely Brian

Brian Conroy - May 17, 2024 at 04:14 PM



“ Bill was easily my favorite teacher in all my years of school. Aside from classroom study, he made time to spend with me on my interest in writing, even after I had graduated. My condolences to the family.

Mary Kelch - May 16, 2024 at 05:38 PM

LB

“ Mr. Polito had a profound impact on my life. He was a superb teacher, and I value many lessons learned in his class. My thoughts are with his family.

Laura Jean Brand - May 16, 2024 at 11:51 AM

JC

“ I had (will always have) tremendous respect for Bill as a colleague and most importantly, as a friend. His knowledge of literature was vast, and his insights, acute and extensive. He was a friend who stepped up when there was a need, who gave his truth if asked, and one who could always make me smile with a, “ Hey, Jo- Bo”.
Rest well, my friend. You made a difference.
My thoughts are with Kay, Jason, Steve, and all of Bill’s family.
Jo Coffey

Jo Coffey - May 13, 2024 at 07:52 PM

RW

“ Mr. Polito was my senior year English teacher. I learned a lot from him that year and can still hear some of the literary quotes he taught us for our final exam. “Brevity is the soul of wit!” The Politos were also our neighbors across the street. He’d see my dad out doing yard work on a hot day and come over with a cold beer. Great memories! Sending my love to the family.

Renee Weller - May 12, 2024 at 08:29 AM

ST

“ Kay and family, Just heard of Bills passing. So sorry for your loss. Bill was a great guy, always enjoyed talking to him on the rare occasions when we got together. RIP Bill.

Steve - May 11, 2024 at 04:08 PM

WC

“ There have been so many encomiums shared so far (yes, Bill, I checked the word -- I think it's right, here), that I need not go further. But when I joined the English Dept (a strong dept at the time), Bill took me under his wing. I knew nothing about teaching, less about real literature, and he convinced me that "I could do it." It was clear to me that when I walked in the door, Bill Polito, by force of his intelligence and personality, commanded the scene (despite many other strong and intelligent personalities -- I can't name names because I don't want to leave anyone out. [Candy Carlo].). Luckily we became friends. Great teacher (you could look it up). IMO, a great man. [Bill, there's drywall on sale somewhere; so let's but 40 sheets just in case we need it.]

William G Clauss - May 11, 2024 at 09:50 AM

WC

get not but in last line

William G Clauss - May 11, 2024 at 09:52 AM

BD

“ It would be hard to exaggerate Bill’s beneficent impact on my life. He took a personal interest in my development as a writer and challenged me to think more rigorously, write more energetically, and imagine a more ambitious future. I owe a great deal of my success as a journalist to his relentless encouragement and confidence in my talent.

I’ve visited him nearly every year in the half-century since I took my first Humanities class with him, and I’m distraught to learn we’ve shared our last cup of coffee or tumbler of scotch. My consolation is that we enjoyed each other’s company for so many years, and that I had so many opportunities to let him know what a difference he made.

Brian Dickerson - May 10, 2024 at 11:29 PM

RD

“ i was close friends with Bills granddaughter clara. some summer of early 2000 i moved into a house right next door to bill and his wife. clara, his granddaughter, ended up living there for a summer while their house was renovated. that summer i shared countless memories with her and her grandparents. they were always there and always put up with our crazy adventures. one day bill mowed the lawn while carrying clara and i on a trailer on the back. we went over a nest of ground bees and went running and screaming inside. it was painful, but a core memory that i’ll remember for the rest of my life , along with many more. they were such beautiful people to be around. may Bill rest in paradise, and may none of us forget the amazing man he was. rest in peace. sending all my love and condolences to the politico family and all that had the blessing of knowing him❤️

ryenne dadey - May 10, 2024 at 08:43 PM

JL

“ *Bill was one of the best friends a man could have. I spent many years fishing, skiing and talking about life. I will miss him like no other person in my life. God bless Kay and his entire family.*

John Lindblad - May 10, 2024 at 06:15 PM

KO

“ *Bill was my senior English teacher, back in 1983, and he was the first person who told me, "You can write." Any success I've had as an author can be traced back in great part to his encouragement and to him teaching me how to read a novel -- to discover both its art and its humanity. The character of Tom Flynn -- the straight-talking and ethical newspaperman who appears in all my novels -- is a tribute to him. I'm so grateful I saw him recently -- and I extend my heartfelt condolences to Kay and the family.*



Karen Odden - May 10, 2024 at 06:14 PM

MS

“ *Bill was the best teacher I ever had in so many ways. Later in life Bill become a dear friend. He will be missed deeply.*

Mary Walter Sfikas - May 10, 2024 at 04:56 PM

SG

“ Deepest sympathies to Kay, his family, and many friends. Bill was one of my favorite teachers, (I still remember the ‘Ancients vs Moderns’ unit). With patience, talent, and a sense of humor, he made learning fun. My father and I ran into Bill in a fast food place one summer evening as he was heading home from a painting job. As he was leaving, he told my dad, “if all our students were like your son, we would never have any problems at school”. Well boy, was my dad proud! I never forgot it, and as a long time teacher and Coach I stole that line many times when appropriate - and every time I thought of him. Steve G ‘75.

Steve Girolmo - May 10, 2024 at 04:13 PM

AL

“ 1 file added to the album Tribute Wall



Alice - May 10, 2024 at 01:52 PM

AL

Comfort zone.

Alice - May 10, 2024 at 01:55 PM

TM

Classic!

Teresa Mueller - May 10, 2024 at 02:35 PM

TS

“ 4 files added to the album Lots of good times



Tom Sullivan - May 10, 2024 at 01:06 PM

DT

Bill was one of the best teachers, and people, that I have known. He didn't teach English, he taught learning. He always worked from a base of knowledge mixed with humor. I will miss him. Bless you, Kay.

Don Taylor - May 10, 2024 at 05:21 PM

DT

*I drew a caricature of Bill on one of my notebooks. I gave it to him when I graduated. I got the nose, forehead, and overall demeanor. His comment? "Why didn't I get a butt?"
Dzt*

Don Taylor - May 12, 2024 at 08:41 PM