



William E. "Wild Bill" Keller

November 19, 1946 - December 19, 2017

William E. "Wild Bill" Keller has "slipped the surly bonds of Earth and now dances the skies on laughter-silvered wings." He departed to join the great Formation in heaven on Dec. 19, 2017. Bill was born on Nov. 19, 1946, in Ravenna, Ohio. In 1948 he and his parents moved to Mentor where he became a lifelong resident. He graduated from Mentor High School in 1964 and Adrian College with a B.A. degree in History/Political Science in 1968. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force in 1968. In 1970 Bill completed pilot training at Del Rio, Texas and became the first Mentor High School graduate to become an Air Force pilot. He served six years as a pilot of KC-135 air refueling tankers for the Strategic Air Command. In 1974, he was honorably discharged with the rank of captain. After owning his own auto body shop in Rapid City, South Dakota, he returned to Mentor in 1976 and graduated from Kent State University in 1977 with a B.S. degree in Elementary Education. He taught grades two through six, primarily at Bellflower School for 25 years. During this time Bill earned a Master's degree in Education from Kent State in 1984. He retired from teaching in 2002.

Living an involved life was Bill's hobby. He loved building his G scale model train and building model planes. He was quite fond of riding his motorcycle through the back roads of Lake and Geauga Counties.

He appreciated high performance and antique cars and was so proud to be a member of the Lake County Cruisers Car Club with his 1957 dusk rose

Thunderbird. He loved his Cleveland Indians and Browns teams but was extremely proud to be a Green Bay Packer owner, having purchased one share that got him a blade of grass at Lambeau Field.

His passion for history was immense, especially Civil War history. Bill was an advocate in the preservation of Civil War battlefields and was financially generous in saving these lands. During his lifetime he visited all 50 states at least twice, including most of the national parks. When asked what was the most important event of his life, he'd immediately answer, marrying my friend and true love, Virginia, because she opened my heart to love again and renewed my faith in God. They married on July 25, 1992.

Bill was preceded in death by his loving parents Ted R. and Geneva (Michener) Keller. He is survived by his beloved wife, Virginia, cousin Mark (Mary) Duffy and their children Megan and Mitch (Jen) Duffy; Brother-in-law David (Beth) Brudapast; sister-in-law Roberta Brudapast nephew, Noah Brudapast, and niece Emily Brudapast.

A sincere thank you is extended to all staff at the Center for Dialysis Care who helped Bill on his journey through the dialysis process for the past ten years and to the Continuous Care Team of the Hospice of the Western Reserve.

A celebration of Bill's life will be held from 2-6 p.m. on Saturday, January 20, 2018 at the Brunner Sanden Deitrick Funeral Home & Cremation Center 8466 Mentor Ave., Mentor, OH 44060.

A memorial service and time of sharing memories of Bill will begin at 6 p.m. Saturday, the 20th at the funeral home to conclude the celebration. Private family inurnment will be at Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery, Rittman, OH at a later date.

In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made to the Civil War Trust, 1140 Professional Court, Hagerstown, MD 21740 or to Hospice of the Western Reserve, 17876 St. Clair Avenue, Cleveland 44110-2602, donate online at www.hospicewr.org.

Please offer condolences at www.brunners.com

Cemetery Details

Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery

10175 Rawiga Rd.
Seville, OH 44273
(330) 335-3069

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JAN 20. 2:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

Brunner Sanden Deitrick Funeral Home & Cremation Center
8466 Mentor Avenue
Mentor, OH 44060
(440) 255-3401
ajs@brunners.com
<https://www.brunners.com/>

Memorial Service

JAN 20. 6:00 PM (ET)

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Tribute Wall

MR

“ Like the other memories shared, Mr Keller was my favorite and most memorable teacher from my elementary school days. My family moved around a lot, but I attended Bellflower K-4th grade, moved cross town to Garfield Elementary for 5th, and then back to Bellflower for 6th with Mr Keller. So thankful we moved back! He inspired a love of learning, a fascination with aircraft and flying (which I've pursued), a love for the nitty gritty details of history (like a paper I wrote on the epic story of Masada with diagrams and drawings that earned me an A++++) and inspired me to make my first batch of Nestle Toll house cookies which I carried to school in a shoebox on Mr Keller's birthday. Mr Keller was bigger than life. We moved away from Mentor after 7th grade, and I've only been back once since, but Mr Keller is the best part of my memory of that time. Amazing man. Thank you for the memories Wild Bill. :))

Mark Ruby - November 10, 2019 at 05:22 PM

CM

“ Mr Keller was also my 6th grade teacher. I immediately recall the airplanes on the ceiling, the railway in the back of the classroom, and officially becoming a village idiot. My brother also had Mr Keller as his teacher the year before. I remember math contests at the chalkboard, and how he made learning fun. His personality was infectious and he incorporated his hobbies and himself into the classroom and his students. He would have been happy to know I earned a History degree since it was one of his interests as well. I will never forget him as he was one of those people who crossed my path and made a difference. I only smile from ear to ear when I think of him. He will be truly missed. My condolences to his family, friends, and students.

Cara McCloskey

Cara McCloskey - June 28, 2018 at 12:26 PM

TB

“ *Tom & Norma Brow lit a candle in memory of William E. "Wild Bill" Keller*



Tom & Norma Brow - January 19, 2018 at 07:05 PM



“ *Like most, I have fond memories of Mr. Keller from elementary school at Bellflower. From his history lessons to his iguana, he made everyday exciting. I'm very sad to hear of his passing, but his family should know the true impact he made on the lives of the kids at Bellflower. He was a truly great teacher.*

Chris Grinstead - January 09, 2018 at 05:26 PM

 Ryan
Craggs

“ *Mr. Keller was my sixth grade teacher. All the kids at Bellflower Elementary knew him from an early age; his was the room with model airplanes strung from the rafters, and his was the voice that boomed. He seemed intimidating when you were 4 feet tall, but you quickly learned how caring of a man and educator he was. While we learned all the required subjects, social studies was a special time with Mr. Keller. Ancient Sumerian and Roman history seem faraway to a 12-year-old, but when you can sit on a couch or bean bag and listen to tales—and not just facts and figures—they suddenly seem a lot closer than you'd ever imagine. To think that we could journey all the way from there through the modern U.S., while enjoying it as adolescents, speaks volumes of Mr. Keller's ability to engage students. Kids always giggled to find out someone had spotted him riding his motorcycle around town. But anyone who didn't have him as a teacher quietly envied those who did.*

I haven't spoken to Mr. Keller likely since I moved on to junior high school, but I can say he had a lasting impact on my life. I'm saddened to hear of his passing, but happy I got to learn from him during a formative time in my life.


Ryan Craggs - January 09, 2018 at 04:56 PM

CH

“ *Caren & Frank Hunchuck lit a candle in memory of William E. "Wild Bill" Keller*



Caren & Frank Hunchuck - January 09, 2018 at 11:57 AM

 James Smola

“ Mr. Keller was my first teacher i had in mentor when I moved from Euclid in 1999. Moving to a completely new environment with such different kinds of people to interact with. Having Mr. Keller for a teacher made my first year in mentor memorable and I'm grateful for his passion and his love for teaching.

James Smola - December 28, 2017 at 06:05 PM

JR

“ Mr. Keller was my 6th grade teacher. He always made class entertaining due to his way of making a story interesting.. Rocket day was my favorite day. It saddens me to hear this news.

Jon Ruolo - December 28, 2017 at 05:04 PM

KS

“ Mr. Keller was one of the best teachers I ever had. I was blessed to have him as my 2nd and 6th grade teacher at Bellflower in the 1980s. His crazy stories made history seem interesting and relevant. He instilled a lifelong love of learning which has helped me during my path to becoming a medical professional. In addition to being an inspiring teacher, he was a kind and thoughtful human being. He came to my mother's funeral after she passed away before I started 7th grade. I will never forget him or his impact. He will be sorely missed.

Kelly Smith - December 27, 2017 at 11:33 PM

PT

“ The passion for teaching was so evident with Mr. Keller. Thank you for sharing that with our children and the Bellflower community.


The Trivisonno Family - Once a Card, Always a Card

Pam Trivisonno - December 26, 2017 at 11:39 AM

RH

Mr Keller was my favorite teacher. He had a way of teaching that kept you interested and focused. I will never forget him and I am proud to say that I am an honorary Village Idiot from his class back in 1995-96, and yes I still have my pin!!!

Robert Holcomb - December 26, 2017 at 04:07 PM


Susan
Edwards

Mr. Keller was my sixth grade teacher in 1986. I can't believe how long ago that was. I remember enjoying his class and having a lot of fun. I also remember how calming he was when we had an Earth quake. One of the few in the history of Mentor. My sympathies.

Susan Edwards - December 27, 2017 at 08:07 PM

RA

Bill was such a Great Guy. He always had an interesting story to tell when I seen him. I will miss him dearly Thank You for enriching all our lives with your vast knowledge. Prayers to the family and may God Bless You All.... Randy Adams ❤️

Randy Adams - December 30, 2017 at 03:21 PM