



William H. Jermann

June 29, 1935 - November 6, 2021

William H. Jermann Obituary 6/29/1935 to 11/6/2021

If you lived in Memphis for the last 54 years, you likely saw University of Memphis Engineering.

Professor William Howard (Bill) Jermann riding his bike from his home in East Memphis to the University, rain, or shine. You know the guy, the one with the news cap on, riding slowly, walking his bike across the street. If you knew him, you also knew he was both brilliant and charming to everyone he met. You knew that he loved and spoiled his lovely wife Elaine for 58 years. You knew he raised three smart, athletic, and nutty kids, Bill Jr., Mary-Cay (Jermann-Robinson), and Robin (Jermann-Rabito).

Although no one could be good enough for his daughters, he ultimately loved and admired his sons-in-law Terrence and Michael. You knew that he was so proud of his grandkids Alex (Robinson) and Thomas (Rabito). Maybe you even knew that he had a hilarious way with words and spoke his own special language, in a Yogi Berra-ish kind of way.

Maybe you saw him at St. Louis Catholic Church on Sundays since he never missed Mass until the very end. Maybe you knew that his kids graduated from St. Louis School, CBHS and St. Agnes Academy and that all have successful careers.

Bill was devout, but practical about religion. He was always pleased if “Father Fast Mass” was the priest performing the liturgy. In all seriousness he had great respect for the late Monsignor Paul W. Clunan and loved his homespun yet insightful homilies.

Maybe you saw him at Huey’s, or his favorite Italian place, “Sam and Pete’s” as he called it. And you know that he was always surrounded by family, and never, never let anyone else pick up the bill or leave the tip. He would always fold the tip money in half and fan it out, you know so we looked like “big spenders.”

And Bill loved his Sports: Memphis Tigers, Memphis Grizzlies, Cleveland Browns, Cleveland Indians, UCONN Lady Huskies, Tennessee Titans and St. Louis Cardinals. After any close win he would call his daughter Mary-Cay and say, “Never a doubt,” or “We had it all the way.” He loved Larry Finch and Penny Hardaway. Not so much John Calipari. He drove his kids to St. Louis to see Lou Brock steal bases. He lamented their loss in the Wild Card game this year. He loved the fact that all his children swam for Coach Fadgen at Memphis Tigers Swimming. He continued to follow his children in their triathlon and running pursuits. Certainly, he is still watching and cheering from above.

You probably did not know just how brilliant Bill was. As the fourth of four boys by Edmond L. Jermann, and Dorothy S. Jermann, he was plucked out of regular old kindergarten, and placed at Major Works Elementary School, a school for “dem smart kids” as he would say.

He began his college education at John Carroll College in Cleveland and earned his bachelor’s and master’s Degrees in Electrical Engineering and Mathematics at University of Detroit. There he met his wife, Elaine. They both also graduated from the University of Connecticut, Bill with a PhD in Electrical Engineering. You might know that Bill was a National Science Fellow at NASA in Huntsville during the first lunar landing.

In the Korean War he earned the rank of Captain in the United States Army, and proudly served his country. But Bill’s vocation was teaching from “box to wire” as he liked to say. After completing his doctorate, he taught at both the Coast Guard Academy and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He moved his young family to Memphis in 1967 and accepted a position with the HERFF College of Engineering. Twice he was awarded Professor of the year for the State of Tennessee. He had multiple accolades but none as rewarding as the love his students had for him.

After his stroke in 2008 multiple faculty and students came to his bedside. Bill told them all he had to go back to work, since he was not a “trophy husband.” Despite weeks in the hospital and permanent paralysis to much of the left side of his body, he did return to work and taught two additional years post stroke.

Finally, Bill loved and is loved. He was truly one of a kind. He passed peacefully on his own terms. And he is missed. No doubt that he is in heaven today with his four-legged babies and will be there to greet us. And maybe just maybe, he will let us get the check.

Comments



“ What a wonderful guy! We were colleagues at the University of Memphis and worked together on many committees as well as the Faculty Senate. His smile, the twinkle in his eye and his ready well thought thru comments were highlights of our friendship. Rest In Peace, Bill.

Pat Stevens

pat stevens - November 20, 2021 at 01:21 PM



“ I admired Bill for his courage to return to teaching at the University and to tend his tomato plants as well as maintaining independence after his stroke. My fun memory of Bill was one day when doing laundry at home he lost his balance & landed in the laundry basket & told Elaine he was “Just a basket case.” A great person who leaves a great example & memories. Sympathy to the family.

Barbara Hollis - November 16, 2021 at 08:34 PM