

Drew, William Robert (“Bill”) (Oct. 6, 1939—Aug. 20, 2023)



Bill Drew from the small town of DeWitt, Iowa near the Mississippi River joined our class with most of us In August 1957 for our freshmen year and obtained his B.A. in Economics with the class in June 1961.

As he recalled for our 2016 reunion, “the Grinnell experience was one that had a tremendous impact on me” even though he “struggled with no high school foreign language, no advanced prep courses, no qual-out capability. In those days of Sputnik, many of us thought we should be engineers. A year and a half of physics, ending in nuclear, convinced me to switch to econ and business, although there wasn’t much ‘business’ in the curriculum by the time I started. Accounting had just been dropped as too ‘practical’ for our liberal arts studies.”

“There were many, many good times [at the College], including life at Dibble [Hall], all men on our side of the tracks, women visitors on Sunday (one foot on the floor)—you know the drill. Also waited tables at Cowles [Hall] (was it \$.60 per hour?)”

As a trumpet player in high school, Bill continued that interest at Grinnell by helping organize a Dixieland band during freshmen orientation to entertain the new students and a year later by participating in one of the college jazz bands organized by Herbie Hancock. He also played the trumpet with the Grinnell Orchestra and Collegium Musicum. Our junior year Bill was the editor of the *1960 Cyclone* annual, a member of the Board of Publications and vice-president-secretary of the local chapter of Sigma Delta Chi (the professional journalism fraternity for men) as well as secretary of Dibble Hall. That junior year he was a member of the varsity track team although he later confessed, “I wasn’t cut out to battle running three miles when I hadn’t run for four years.”

“As a heathen, or at least a big-time doubter on entry to Grinnell, I stumbled on a couple of ideas that guided my life:”

- 1) “The simple statement (must have been exposed to this from Paul Kuntz or Neal Klausner) that one definition of God is ‘that than which there can be no greater.’ It is more than just the wording (which still grabs me today), it is the simplicity of the concept. Of course you can embellish the concept, but it seems a pretty sturdy start.”
- 2) “The other subtle impact on this heathen was a ‘Demonstration Mass’ in ARH celebrated by a local priest and the seven or so Catholic students at Grinnell. . . . There was indeed a subtle impact of this Mass which I didn’t act on for another 8 or

10 years [when he joined the Roman Catholic Church]. And the conservatism that I now hold dear sets me apart somewhat from the very liberal spirit of Grinnell.”

“After Grinnell, I spent two years getting an MBA at Emory University in Atlanta, then stints as a sales/marketer with Nestle [in Wisconsin], Nabisco, Beatrice Foods, Graber” followed by 18 years “promoting and branding Wisconsin cheese” as VP, Marketing Services for the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board. After retiring from that Board in 2018, Bill was a part-time residential real estate salesman for several years.

During that initial time in Wisconsin, Bill met and fell in love with Madeline Ann Jones, a Kindergarten teacher in that state’s town of Neenah and they were married June 17, 1967, in that state. After moving to Cambridge, MA for a job with Nabisco, their sons Stephen and James were born in 1969 and 1972. And in 1981 they adopted five-year-old Susan from South Korea.

In the summer of 2023, Bill was diagnosed with a rare and aggressive form of bile duct cancer (cholangiocarcinoma) and three months later he died from that disease. He is survived by wife Madeline, their three children and seven grandchildren. Bill was memorialized at a Mass at Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Parish in Madison, Wisconsin.



He was preceded in death by his parents, Lawrence C. Drew and Mary Myers Drew, both of whom were Grinnellians (classes of '26 and '27), as well as his sister Sarah Kane.

Duane W. Krohnke (author)