

Kell, William Robert (September 13, 1939—June 22, 2013)

Bill Kell of Chicago, Illinois was graduated with our class in 1961 with a B.A. degree in American Studies. He was active in campus journalism with the *Scarlet & Black* newspaper, the *Cyclone* yearbook as Associate Editor (1958-1959) and Editor (1959-60) and as a member of the Board of Publications and the journalism honorary society (Sigma Delta Chi).

When Bill was *Cyclone* Associate Editor, he and the Editor, Joe Nassif, '60, got the publisher's representative "drunk as a skunk" and then proceeded to negotiate details of the publication contract for the 1959 edition "into the wee small hours of the morning" often to the amusement of gathered students below the open windows of the yearbook's second floor office in the old Student Union. As a result, Bill Halama '62 believes Grinnell "got better quality yearbooks for the price it paid than any other school in the country." (Indeed, the 1959 *Cyclone* is larger in size and features than the others during our years at the College.)



Halama adds that Kell "was a very bright guy with a quick and sharp sense of humor and a definite way with words."

As a member of Cowles Hall's House Council for 1960-61, Kell was a co-instigator of its secession from student government when the Hall proclaimed it would make and enforce its own rules, would no longer be part of student government and would not be subject to C of HP rules and dictates. (For more details of the secession see Ernie Rutherford's obituary.)



To the left is a photo of the leaders of the Cowles secession, all 1961 class members (from left to right): Ernie Rutherford, John Powers, Bill Kell, Jack Pitts and John Morris.

Upon graduation Kell was awarded one of the College's Travel Service Scholarships and in 1961-1963 served as an Instructor of English and American Studies at Anatolia College in Thessaloniki, Greece. This experience convinced him that his future lay in communications, teaching and public service.

With him at Anatolia was classmate Nancy Welch Barnby, who says Bill "fully embraced the Greek experience, not only becoming quite proficient at speaking Greek, but also occasionally enlisting [her and other] fellow American teachers to

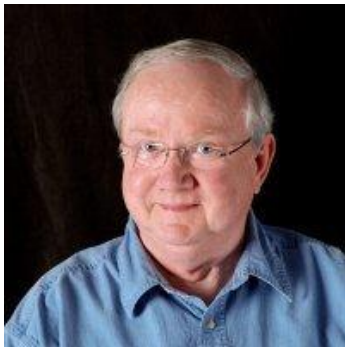
aid him in hosting a typical Greek feast -- once with two spit-roasted suckling pigs as the entre.”

Returning to the U.S., Bill served in the U.S. Army Reserve and worked for Pacific Telephone in San Francisco, California before moving in 1964 to Minnesota, where he lived for the rest of his life.

He went to graduate school in American Studies at the University of Minnesota, which granted him the M.A. degree in 1972. While at the U of M he served as Assistant Director of its Liberal Arts Honor Program and initiated *Research* magazine that highlighted the contributions of faculty and staff.

Thereafter Bill was Director of Communications for Medtronic Corporation and a Managing Partner of a management consulting firm (the Forsythe Group) and an employee of another such firm (Wells & Miller) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, where he worked on plans to improve water quality in the Minnesota River Basin.

For over 20 years Bill also served as an Adjunct Professor at the Twin Cities’ Metropolitan State University where he taught communications and public relations courses. Nancy Welch Barnby says that he was “popular in the classroom because of his sage wit. He loved those classes, and the kids loved him. He considered those classes part of his avocation -- fun to have after a day of work at his other job.”



To the left is a recent photo of Bill from his LinkedIn profile.

In 2010 Bill joined Golden Valley [Minnesota] Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod), which believes that “the entire Bible is the inspired message of God’s love and hope for all people . . . [and] is without error.” His pastor reports that Bill “always shared a thoughtful insight” about the sermons and was “always receptive to the message that in Christ there is forgiveness and that Jesus loved him.” A church member recalls that Bill loved the contemporary music at its services and its child care center.

The program for his funeral at the church said, “Bill was never shy about voicing his opinions, always backing them up with forceful logic and well-documented evidence. He championed Liberal Arts education, an equitable society, and the importance of research . . . [and] relished discussing public policy.” His “curiosity, enthusiasm, and sense of humor” also fondly were remembered.

An only child whose parents died when he was young, Bill was single and had no known relatives when he died of a heart attack after being in a nursing home to recover from a broken ankle.

Bill, however, became a beloved "adopted" uncle to the daughter of a couple who introduced him to the Golden Valley church. She, however, ignored Bill's advice to go to Grinnell and instead attended St. Olaf College.

Bill also served as an "Uncle" to Max Brauer ('07) from his birth through a close friendship with his parents, Ralph A. Brauer ('67) and Donna J. Herman Brauer ('68). Growing up, Max enjoyed spending Christmas Eve with Uncle Bill, who taught him at a young age how to make saganaki (flaming Greek cheese). They also enjoyed many picnics and trips to comedy clubs. Though Bill did not steer Max towards Grinnell or his subsequent decision to become a lawyer, Bill was happy about the first choice and eventually accepted the latter. Max fondly remembers Uncle Bill for his wit, way with words, and skepticism of anything "normal" -- all of which had a profound impact on Max's worldview.

Gifts in Bill's memory were encouraged to be made to St. Paul's Union Gospel Mission, which "helps people in trouble [with such things as] . . . addiction to alcohol" and which had provided such assistance to Bill.¹

¹ This memorial is based upon the Alumni Office's file for Bill Kell; [William Kell Obituary](#), StarTribune (July 3, 2013); [Bill Kell Profile](#), LinkedIn.com; Metropolitan State University, <http://www.metrostate.edu/>; [Union Gospel Mission, www.ugmstpaul.org](http://www.ugmstpaul.org); [Golden Valley Lutheran Church, www.gvlc.net](http://www.gvlc.net); Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, <http://www.lcms.org>; [William R. Kell Memorial Service Program and Obituary](#), July 11, 2013; Rev. Rex Rinne, Message for William R. Kell Memorial Service, July 11, 2013; email, Bill Halama to Duane Krohnke, July 18, 2013; conversations with Rev. Rex, Rinne, Cheryl Forsyth, Ralph Brauer, Donna Brauer, Max Brauer, Nancy Welch Barnby.