



Mr. William P. Downing

February 3, 2023

William P. Downing

Loving Husband, Father, Grandfather

William P. Downing passed away at home on February 3rd after a brief but hard-fought battle with cancer. He was the son of the late John and Gertrude (Madden) Downing and was born in January of 1944 in Lowell, MA. He attended Lowell High School, received his Bachelors' degree from Saint Anselm's College and his Masters' degree from MA State University at Lowell. In 1966, William began his long career with the Billerica Public Schools teaching 6th grade at the Hajjar and Howe Schools. He later became a teaching principal at the Pollard School and then in 1978 he took on the position of principal at the Thomas Ditson Elementary School on Boston Road. He later assumed the principalship of the new Thomas Ditson School on Cook Street, where he worked until his retirement in 2012. That same year the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Billerica honored him with the Man of the Year award and he received a recognition from the Massachusetts State House of Representatives.

William was a committed and caring educator and dedicated family man. During his 46-years in education he influenced countless children and touched many families. He saw the potential in each and every kid, treated them with respect, and tried to help set them on a path to success. He adored his Ditson family almost as much as he adored his own family. He was a devoted

husband and father. With a little coaching, he never forgot an anniversary. He was there for each of his kids, no matter the circumstance, with support and encouragement. He never missed a game, meet or dance recital. William was also an avid New England sports fan – he had a love/hate relationship with the Red Sox and never missed a Pats game. He was a junk food aficionado and an armchair Jeopardy champion. He loved his grandchildren and never missed an opportunity to tease them. He was a compassionate and kind man who will be greatly missed by all that knew him.

He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Dorothy, and their three children, David, Elizabeth and Mary-Jackelyn, his son-in-law Brent Rourke, daughter-in-law Olga Downing and four grandchildren, Anya, Ivan, Ciarán and Campbell. He is also survived by brothers and sisters-in-law Charles and Frances Swenson, Richard and Barbara Jennings, James Campbell and Gail Downing. He was predeceased by his brother John Peter Downing, sister-in-law Theresa Campbell, and brother-in-law Raymond Campbell.

William wanted to give special thanks to Dr. Omar Ali for his care and friendship and Beacon Hospice for their support and kindness.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND WILLIAM'S FUNERAL MASS ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH AT 10 AM AT THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH 144 EAST MERRIMACK STREET LOWELL, MA. BURIAL WILL TAKE PLACE WITH HIS FAMILY.

AS AN EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY, MEMORIAL DONATIONS IN WILLIAM'S NAME MAY BE MADE TO THE BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF GREATER BILLERICA, 19 CAMPBELL ROAD, BILLERICA, MA 01821 OR AT <https://www.billericabgc.com/civicrm/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=1>

ARRANGEMENTS BY THE
FAY McCABE FUNERAL DIRECTORS
978-459-9222 www.faymccabe.com

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

FEB 17. 10:00 AM (ET)

Immaculate Conception Church
144 East Merrimack Street
Lowell, MA 01852

Tribute Wall

JD

“ *I extend my deepest sympathies to the Downing family. Bill will be surely missed. I really enjoyed working with Bill. He was a kind person and a good colleague. RIP, Bill.*
Jay Dumas

Jay Dumas - February 20, 2023 at 09:07 AM

TS

“ *to the downing family im sorry for loss*

Tracy Spinale - February 15, 2023 at 03:21 PM

PS

“ *A tribute to a great educator and most of all a great person. Thank you Mr. Downing.*

Paul and Deborah Savini - February 15, 2023 at 01:25 PM

JH

“ *Our deepest Sympathies to the Downing Family. You will be in our thoughts and prayers . We had the pleasure of meeting Bill, while season ticket holders of the Lowell Spinners. We had many amazing conversations. He was a true Gentlemen. He always took the time to speak to our sons. We will cherish the memories that we hold of Bill. May he rest in peace. Heaven has become a bit brighter with Bill's arrival. God Bless him !*

john J hughes - February 14, 2023 at 07:59 PM

SR

“ Sean & Erin Rourke lit a candle in memory of Mr. William P. Downing



Sean & Erin Rourke - February 14, 2023 at 05:01 PM

DP

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with the Downing family. What a wonderful educator and even better human. Godspeed Mr. Downing.
The Peters family

Dawn Peters - February 12, 2023 at 05:44 PM

TF

“ Our deepest condolences to the entire Downing family. He was funny, kind, caring, understanding and knew everyone's name. He loved all of the kids and interacted with all the families. He will truly be missed.



The Patterson Family - February 11, 2023 at 11:53 AM

KF

“ Most wonderful educator there ever was. He never forgot any of us, and we will never, ever, forget him ❤️

Kristen Ford - February 10, 2023 at 07:51 PM

ML

“ More photos from the old Ditson farewell.



Mary Leach - February 10, 2023 at 07:03 PM

ML

“ When Mr. Downing came to the old Ditson farewell gathering before building was demolished, it was like a celebrity had arrived. He clearly made an impact on so many lives.



Mary Leach - February 10, 2023 at 06:57 PM

TK

“ Mr. Downing was such a lovely man. He was the school Principle when I was at the old Ditson (1979-1984). He was so kind to me and my two brothers. He was so nice to my parents, as well! He truly loved his students and helped make school a special place for all of us! I saw him several years ago, before he retired. I dropped off donations of school supplies because I loved him and my teachers there so much! Rest in peace, Mr. Downing!

The Henckker Kidd - February 10, 2023 at 06:43 PM



“ *Mr. Downing was a great guy and remembered my family even after we were long out of school at the Ditson and he was always smiling and cheerful. He will never be forgotten and deeply missed. I have had so many great memories with him as the principal when I was in school at the Ditson.*

Danielle Spongberg - February 10, 2023 at 11:59 AM



“ *Mrs Downing and family, I am truly saddened by the loss of Bill. All of you played an important part during my childhood on Luce Street! Fond memories of playing catch with Bill on your front lawn and having him as my coach on the Shedd Park Little League Red Sox. As I grew up, I can picture Bill working in the front yard and no matter how busy he was, he was always willing to put his work aside and catch up with me. I will truly miss him. May his memory be eternal.*

*Warmly and Fondly,
Jay Tsapatsaris*

Jay Tsapatsaris - February 10, 2023 at 10:06 AM

CH

“ *Mr. Downing was truly the heart of the Ditson. He took the time to know all his kids and he honestly never forgot them. I moved on from the Ditson in 91 and ran into Mr. Downing at the local Kmart when I was about 20, he stopped me, remembered me by name and wanted to hear how I was. I walked away amazed he still remembered me. When we had the farewell gathering for the old Ditson in 2021, I wasn't aware that not only former teachers were planning to be there but Mr. Downing as well and I was beyond thrilled at the opportunity to see everyone. Although 30 years had past since I was one of his kids, when I finally got the chance to chat with him (had to wait my turn as he was quite the celebrity) he not only remembered me but brought up my brother as well. There will never be another principal like him, he undoubtedly cared about his kids and their parents.*

Cathy Hertler - February 10, 2023 at 09:50 AM

TF

“ *I was very saddened to hear about this terrible loss. All 3 of my kids attended the Ditson and loved Mr. Downing. He was always very easy to talk to, loved all of the kids and interacted with all the families. He will be truly missed. My sincere condolences to his family.*

The Stumpf Family - February 10, 2023 at 07:22 AM

DJ

“ *Mr. Downing was my mom's principal at the Ditson . My mom adored him. Whenever I went to visit or sub at his school he was so welcoming and kind. You could tell he loved his job. He even came to my mom's wake when she passed. Sending thoughts and prayers to his family at this difficult time.*

Diana Fay Juszczak - February 10, 2023 at 05:00 AM

NI

“ Like many people here in Billerica, Mr Downing was my principal at the old Ditson. When I brought my kids to start school, there was a familiar friendly face waiting to greet the new kids! To my complete surprise, he remembered me by name! He was a special man and made such a difference in the lives of so many kids! Thankyou Mr Downing❤️ my condolences to his entire family.
Nicole Ippolito

Nicole Ippolito - February 09, 2023 at 10:00 PM

MQ

“ Our deepest condolences to the entire Downing family! Both of my daughters went to the new Ditson. During those 10 years, I spent a lot of time there Bill/Mr. D and I got to know each other quite well. Our school/family experience was amazing and a lot of that was due to Bill/Mr. D! He was funny, kind, caring, understanding and knew everyone's name. He would go out of his way to ask how I was doing and then continue to chat. He truly cared about his students and their families. I spent many visits asking for advice whether about an experience they had or related to schooling. His door was always open. My family has the utmost respect for Bill/Mr. D! We are very saddened to hear of his passing. My daughter referred to him as the GOAT of Billerica Public Schools! You will never be forgotten and please know your memory will live on in each of the students lives you were such a big part of. May you rest in the sweetest, eternal peace...🙏

The Quinlan Family

Michele Quinlan - February 09, 2023 at 09:35 PM

BW

“ Bill became my friend after I became a principal in Billerica. He was kind, generous with time, and offered unconditional support and advice to a novice principal. After retirement I missed our evening phone conversations after our buildings were quiet. He was my closest colleague. Without him, my years as a principal would have been infinitely more difficult. I don't know any principal more loved than Bill. After retirement we both became busy with our families that were the center of both our lives so we saw each other at occasional lunches. I will cherish my memories, but will miss his presence in my life. Rest in peace my friend; I will miss you.
Barbara Wittenhagen

Barbara Wittenhagen - February 09, 2023 at 07:19 PM

NS

I really don't know what to say, except I considered Bill as a wonderful boss as well as a loyal friend. He was my principal for 33 years of my 35 years teaching in the Billerica school system. We met in 1972 at the Pollard School. He was the one who gave me my nickname, "The Rooster" and he also straightened me out as far as being on time! A pink slip in your mailbox can do that quickly! We had so many fun times over the years and whenever I had a personal issue he was there with his support. He was not just a boss, but a friend too. When the Pollard School shut down I had to go to the Howe building for one year. I was then asked by the assistant superintendent which school I would like to go to and that was an easy choice for me. I requested to go to the Ditson because I wanted to be with Mr. D! So, I got my wish and got to work with him at the former Ditson as well as the newer Ditson. He was a great principal, but also he was a great human being and friend. He was always there for his students, which he knew by name, and he was also there for his colleagues. He really had a big heart and cared about everyone. He was such a dedicated dad and husband. He was my friend and I will always have fond memories some pretty funny, of him. He was a good man and many will miss him. Sorry, Dotty, for your loss.
Love you, Nancy Schuster

Nancy Schuster - February 11, 2023 at 01:42 AM