

Obituary: for Bill Rapf by Richard du Moulin

My sophomore year roommate, and friend since freshman year, William “Bill” Harry Rapf, passed away on April 3, 2022 after a long battle with pancreatic cancer. Bill and his wife Candace celebrated with many of us at our Fiftieth Reunion in Hanover. It was the following week that Bill felt poorly, checked into the hospital, only to be diagnosed with the cancer. The past four years, Bill showed great courage and had the wonderful support of Candace (whose nursing credentials were earned at Mary Hitchcock), and their son Kevin who commuted regularly from Utah to help out. Bill also had the support of many Dartmouth friends, especially Bill and Linn Clark and Peter and Pam Boorum who lived nearby, and others like Rick Pabst, Lee Reichart who lived further away. Covid restrictions and Bill’s health prevented as many personal visits as we all would have liked.

One of my honors was to have introduced Bill and Candace during sophomore year. I arranged a blind date from intelligence gathered during a raid on Mary Hitchcock. Our mutual interest in sailing kept us in touch over the years. In 2012 Bill joined Lee Reichart ’68 and me to sail my 37-foot ocean racing boat back to New York after the Newport- Bermuda Race. During a gale, with Lee out of commission due to broken ribs, Bill was at the helm when a part of our rigging failed. Bill tacked the boat so quickly that the mast did not fall down. Without Bill’s quick reflexes and skill, the mast would have broken and probably sunk the boat given the 10-15 foot waves. Bill’s quiet competence and humility were representative of how he lived his life. Anticipating his short time remaining, Bill wrote the following obituary to save Candace the stress. In his own words, this describes Bill best. Bill’s final sentence we should all take to heart.

“Bill was born in Los Angeles on August 17th, 1946, the son of Maurice and Louise (Seidel) Rapf. He went to school in New York City and earned degrees from Dartmouth College, San Francisco State University, and Boston University. It was at Dartmouth that he met his wife of more than 50 years, Candace Griffin. They married in 1971 and had one son, Kevin. While at Dartmouth, a group from the Class of ’68 forged a friendship that remains a part of each other’s lives to this day. Their love and support during his illness was very much appreciated.

Bill and Candace moved to Amherst, N.H. in 1968, purchasing a “handyman special”- a farmhouse (circa 1835) that was a wreck. Bill put his carpentry, masonry, electrical and plumbing skills to the test by rebuilding the house as an energy efficient, comfortable home that he loved. It was here that he passed away, with his wife and son by his side.

Bill taught High School Art, Photography, and Pottery for 40 years. He will be remembered for his love of teaching and instilling a visual and creative curiosity in his students. His master’s Thesis “Syllabus For Seeing” became a basis for how he taught. He believed learning to observe the world carefully and thoughtfully is the basis of creativity. Creativity comes from seeing and expressing the uniqueness of the world around us and he tried to impart that philosophy to his students. Bill was very involved with planning and building a new and unique High School for Amherst. After 9 years of volunteer work, Souhegan High School opened in 1992 and Bill was hired as lead Art teacher. He continued at Souhegan until his retirement in 2008, making a positive impact on his students and the culture of the school.

Bill exhibited a “can do” positive approach to life and in his quiet way, was always willing to volunteer to help others with a project, task, or initiative. He was frugal with his money, but generous with his time, talent, and energy. In 1992, Bill volunteered for the Amherst Fire Dept. and remained an active First Responder for 26 years. His fire brothers were close to his heart, and he counted them family. When Bill’s old Engine One was retired this winter, its replacement was dedicated to him. Bill thought the honor was undeserved, but his fellow firemen thought otherwise!

Bill was an avid sailor. He started racing in small boats at age 13 on the South Shore of Long Island. He worked summers as a sailing instructor, was vice commodore of the Dartmouth Sailing team, and spent many years racing off the coast of New Hampshire. He loved the competition and the comradeship of like-minded sailors as well as the quietude of sitting on a boat in some remote cove, enjoying a sunset and a cocktail.

Two years after retiring from Souhegan, Candace and Bill bought a used class B camper van and set off on a three month cross country trip to Alaska and back. That experience began a ten-year exploration of our National Parks, Monuments, roadside oddities, and other points of interest in 49 of the 50 States as well as Canada. It also introduced the couple to a close cadre of friends and fellow campers, and yet another family came into being, the Traveling B’s.

To honor Bill, family and friends are encouraged to take some tangible action against social injustice, climate change and income inequality.”



Bill and Candace at our 50th reunion.



Bill, Candace and Kevin (left side) accompanied by Reichart, Clark and du Moulin families at our 15th reunion.