



William N. Free, Sr.

August 25, 1933 - May 9, 2024

William N. Free, 90, of Toledo, passed away peacefully on May 9, 2024, following a life well lived with honor and care.

Born August 25, 1933 in Seaford, Delaware to Louis J. and Mary Madeline Free, Bill grew up in Chicago and St. Joseph, Michigan. He received his B.A. from Yale, M.A. from Indiana University, and Ph.D. from Yale.

Bill taught in the English Department at Indiana before coming to the University of Toledo in 1966, where he became a Professor of English with a scholarly focus in 18th century English Literature. During a distinguished career at UT that spanned five decades, he also served as department chair, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

A devoted husband and father, Bill relished vacationing with his family along the seacoast in New Harbor, Maine. Along with traveling, antiquing and collecting Inuit art, he enjoyed spending time with friends from the university and the Toledo Blade.

Bill was preceded in death by his brother, Louis, and his beloved wife, Anne. He is survived by his children William, Jr. "Bill," Anne Rebecca "Becky," and Daniel "Dan"; grandchildren Zack, Cal, Jake and Andrew; his sister Julianne and brother George.

Friends may visit at the Coyle Funeral Home, 1770 S. Reynolds Road., on Tuesday, May 14th from 4:00-7:00 p.m. Funeral services will be held on Wednesday, May 15th beginning at 9:30 a.m., in the mortuary, followed by a Funeral Mass at St. Patrick of Heatherdowns Church at 10:00 a.m. Interment Calvary Cemetery. Please view and sign our online "guest registry" at CoyleFuneralHome.com

Cemetery Details

Calvary Cemetery

2224 Dorr St.
Toledo, OH 43607

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY **14**. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Coyle Funeral Home
1770 S. Reynolds Road
Toledo, OH 43614

Funeral Ceremony

MAY **15**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Patrick Of Heatherdowns
4201 Heatherdowns Blvd
Toledo, OH

Tribute Wall

IW

“ I remember how kind Bill was at Becky's and Rory's wedding when Becky was nervous and my daughter, Rose, at four years old, was the flower girl. A good, decent man. We're donating to Doctors Without Borders in his honor. Huge hugs from Rory's side of the family!

Irene Wellman - May 18, 2024 at 06:59 AM

SC

“ We loved Uncle Bill, he was the best. Sending love from Patrick, Sue, Jack & Sophia Cahalane

Sue Cahalane - May 16, 2024 at 05:03 PM

EK

“ Dear Bill (Jr), Becky and Dan,
I am Edith Marvel (NYC) a first cousin to your Dad. (Kari communicated with me.)
I wish to sent my sincerest sympathy to you all on the loss of your kind and wonderful father.
I wish I could be present for his Service this morning.
Prayers,
Edith

Edith K.Marvel - May 15, 2024 at 10:30 AM

JP

“ Bill was my advisor for a masters degree .. I am appreciative for his attention and invaluable advice.. a great guy...

jp - May 13, 2024 at 07:48 PM

DP

“ Dr. Bill Free was very much a part of my doctoral work at the University of Toledo. Between classes and participation in my "committee," I always respected his advice and warmth. Only the very best of blessings to his family. Deacon Norbert Wethington PhD

Deacon Norbert Wethington PhD - May 13, 2024 at 08:23 AM



“ Uncle Bill was always kind. That's what I will remember most. All around him could be screaming kids and tired adults... but I see him smiling.

I wish we had lived closer, but the chance to see the Frees was always a huge event. And I wish I could be there with you all now. But I'm sending all my love.

Mary, David, Miki, Jackie, Jamie, Ellie.

Mary Cahalane - May 12, 2024 at 09:12 AM

MC

“ Mary C. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of William N. Free, Sr..

Mary C. - May 12, 2024 at 09:03 AM

JG

“ It was possibly 1966 or 1967 when I took I believe English 270 with Dr. Free. It was a course, as I remember it, centered around Shakespeare. I have a bachelor's degree, and two post grad degrees, and that course - in terms of enriching my life - is in the top three that I've taken. Very sorry for your family's loss, and nothing but good memories of your loved one. (And every time I got the correct answer in Trivial Pursuits or with trivia at a bar that had to do with literature, perhaps Dr. Free and Ms. Fairchild - English teacher, junior year, high school - could be given some credit!)

joe giannetti - May 12, 2024 at 08:51 AM

JL

Bill was a truly fine colleague and thoughtful, capable academic leader. I loved occasionally crossing paths with him along the coast of Maine. Condolences to his family.

joel lipman - May 12, 2024 at 08:38 PM

JF

It was my pleasure to work with Bill for thirty years. He was always supportive of anything that would make UT a better place for all. Condolences to the family.

Jim Fry - May 12, 2024 at 11:12 PM