

William Foster Batchelder, 92

May 14, 2019



There never was any heart truly great and generous,

that was not also tender and compassionate.

Robert Frost

PLYMOUTH — On May 7, 2019, William Foster Batchelder died peacefully at his home in Plymouth, surrounded by his loving family.

Bill was born in Holderness on Oct. 15, 1926, the only child of Lyman Foster and Ella Fleming Batchelder, both of whom were employed by the Plymouth public school system, Lyman as a custodian and Ella as a second-grade and kindergarten teacher. Bill attended public schools in Plymouth, graduating from Plymouth High School in June 1944. Prior to his graduation, he was enrolled at the University of New Hampshire in December 1943, completing two semesters before he enlisted in the U.S. Navy in October 1944.

On his honorable discharge from the Navy, Bill re-enrolled at the University of New Hampshire, from which he graduated in 1949, and went on to Boston University Law School, obtaining his law degree in 1952.

He then practiced with the Plymouth law firm of William Maynard, later joined by Walter Murphy, and remained in private practice until his appointment by Governor Walter Peterson as a New Hampshire Superior Court Justice in 1970. In 1981, after 11 years on the trial bench, he was appointed by Governor Hugh Gallen to the New Hampshire Supreme Court where he served until his retirement in 1995.

While practicing law in Plymouth, he met, fell in love with and pursued his future wife, Elizabeth Hayward, a student at Plymouth Teachers' College, across the pond to England where she was working with a church youth group. They married in 1955 and had six children: Stephen (deceased);

Anne Dow (John) of Rumney, Mary Baldwin (Gunnar) of Plymouth, Susan (Joel Page) of East Montpelier, Vermont, Robert (Kimberly) of Sandpoint, Idaho, and David (Bridget Laird) of Seeley Lake, Montana. Bill was blessed with 13 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Throughout his life, Bill had an unyielding devotion to his wife, family, community and justice. He cherished Squam Lake, the White Mountains, and great food. He had a passion for skiing, hiking, walks on the farm with Betty, gardening, reading, and writing, and he valued his deep companionship with the many dogs he experienced throughout his long life. Beyond his beloved profession, Bill enjoyed holding court with dear friends and family, perched in front of his wood stove with coffee or nice Scotch, embracing family, friendship, scholarship, knowledge, the pursuit of justice and his unbounded love for Betty.

He was widely regarded as a man of integrity and a principled jurist who was committed to reaching fair and impartial decisions, based on sound legal reasoning and a relentless pursuit of fairness.

Bill will be missed but the seeds of his wisdom leave all whom he touched with hope and love to lift people up and do good.

The Batchelder clan and extended family memorialized Bill's passing with an intimate gathering on May 11 at Undercliff Farm, filled with memories, poetry, letters, music, bagpipes, and lots of love.

In place of calling hours, there will be a Celebration of Life in Bill's honor mid-morning of Sept. 26, at The Barn On-the-Pemi in Plymouth. It would be a privilege for the family to have Bill's friends, neighbors, and colleagues who are so inclined to attend and share in the celebration of Bill's life.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to the following organizations with which Bill was proud to be associated:

The Hon. William F. Batchelder Justice Fund, NH Bar Foundation, 2 Pillsbury Street, Suite 300, Concord, NH 03301. This fund supports legal services for low-income and other disadvantaged people in New Hampshire.

The Young Ladies Library Association, 1 Russell St., Plymouth, NH 03264.

Plymouth Historical Society, PO Box 603, Plymouth, NH 03264.