

William L. Cofell(1919 - 2017)



William L. Cofell, 97

St. Joseph, MN

Nov. 22, 1919 - Nov. 13, 2017

Mass of Christian burial will be held at 10:00 a.m. Monday, November 20, 2017 at St. John the Baptist Abbey Church in Collegetown for William L. Cofell, age 97 of St. Joseph. Burial will be in the parish cemetery. There will be a visitation from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 19th, at St. John the Baptist Parish Center and on Monday one hour prior to the services at the church. Parish prayers will be at 4:00 p.m. Sunday at the parish center.

William Lawrence Cofell, born November 22, 1919, died on Monday, November 13, 2017, one week shy of his 98th birthday. He was blessed to spend 66 of those years married to Lorraine Helen Westrup, who he married on a sunny morning, June 16, 1951, in Eden Valley, Minnesota. They met on a blind date as students at the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University, where William was attending on the GI Bill. He served in the China-Burma-India theater during [World War II](#) as an [Army](#) weatherman and teletype technician for the weather squadron supporting the Tenth Air Force's operations over the Himalayas. India was a long way from where he was born in Edgeley, North Dakota, to Floyd William and Elizabeth Henrietta (Lawrence) Cofell. William loved learning from an early age, and before joining the Army, he was proud to have graduated from Montpelier High School and to have worked as a trucker salesman for the Farmers Union Oil Company in South Heart, North Dakota.

After graduating from St. John's in 1949, William taught high school in Melrose from 1950 to 1953 while completing his master's degree at the [University of Minnesota](#) in 1952. In 1953, William returned to St. John's as a Professor of Education, where he remained until he retired as Professor Emeritus in 1986. Year after year, he would remark to Lorraine sincerely, "This is the best class I've ever had." He was tireless in his dedication to young people and their education, serving as an advisor to students involved in the [civil rights](#) struggle of the 1970s, a member of the State Commission on Teacher Education from 1956 to 1967, and as chairman of the Minnesota Teacher Education Council from 1968 to 1969. He was in the Minnesota Trainer of Teacher Education Program from 1969-1970, and pioneered the Human Relations Training programs until 1978. William was a committed member of St. John the Baptist Parish in Collegetown and an oblate of Saint Benedict. He also served on the St. Cloud Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocesan Rural Life Committee. He was a member and past president of the Collegetown Community Credit Union and was an active member of the Stearns County and Minnesota Historical Societies. The year he retired from teaching, William was appointed by Governor Perpich as a charter member of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, where he served until 1991.

If William was a man of uncommon service to his community, to his family he was a man of uncommon love. His children will remember him as the father who kept them safe, encouraged

their artistic talents and education, and taught them by example the importance of recognizing the good in every person. To his grandchildren, he will always be "Grandpa Bill," who taught them how to drive a tractor, would let them win at checkers and chess, and planted in their hearts countless seeds of kindness that will bear fruit all the days of their lives. To his friends and neighbors, he was a good-natured companion who loved a game of "500" and was generous with the gladiolas he grew in his garden.

William Cofell died as he lived, surrounded by his family and with a heart full of love. He is survived by his wife, Lorraine, his children Paul (Christine), Mary Herbert (Jim), Ann, Jeanne (Patrick), Patricia (Al), John (Ruth), and David (Stephanie); his sisters Lois Scouten and Edith Brady; his 15 grandchildren Laurel, Patrick, Jon Paul, Lucas, Joshua, Katie, Timothy, Ashley, Kieran, Emerson, Liam, Audrey, Emiliana, Leela, and Maura; and 16 great grandchildren Benjamin, Samuel, Abigail, Lawrence, Lillian, Silas, Miren, Esmee, Winston, James, William, Áine, Jayber, Charlotte, Virginia, and Eleanora. He is preceded in death by his parents, by his siblings Elizabeth, Eugene, Gordon, Marvin and Arthur, and by his infant daughter with whom he is rejoined in Christ.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the William and Lorraine Cofell Scholarship Fund at St. John's University, Collegeville, MN.