



## Bill O'Neill

January 5, 1934 - April 24, 2025

William James O'Neill, Jr., 91, of Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood, passed away after a sudden cardiac event April 24, 2025.

Born in Chicago and raised near Wrigley Field, Bill graduated from DePaul Academy High School and earned his B.S. in Engineering from Chicago Technical College and worked towards his Master's degree at the University of Chicago. He served three years with 11th Airborne division, 188th infantry regiment and competed on the Airborne boxing team. His time in the military was transformative- it wasn't just about discipline or duty, but about meeting people from every walk of life. He led a life that was deeply real- just as comfortable sharing drinks with construction workers and dining with industrialists or professors. He never judged, remained open to every person he met, and believed firmly that everyone had something to teach him.

Bill worked as a project manager for the City of Chicago, Dept of Public Works from 1965 – 71, supervising the construction of storm sewers, highways, and bridges. He bought his first building in 1963, "proved to be a good idea." Bill met the love of his life Jeanie on an American Youth Hostels Ski trip. They married in 1969, "proved to be the best idea".

The couple invested in real estate on the north side of Chicago, managing up to 80 apartments at a time. Bill's life was truly rags-to-riches, but he never

flaunted it. He bought properties that others overlooked, in neighborhoods that would become valuable. He treated his tenants with respect and worked with those behind on payments, rather than pushing for eviction.

Although they downsized their work in later years, they remained active in neighborhood associations and real estate groups, and traveled to every continent except Antarctica -- from Tibet to New Zealand to Greenland and South Africa. They hiked up Mt. Kilimanjaro, took a five-day camel trip in the Negev desert, and enjoyed many hikes throughout Europe and U.S. National Parks. In 2010, they biked 350 miles from Pittsburgh PA to Washington DC. They owned homes in New Buffalo, Michigan and Mission Beach, San Diego, California.

Bill was high-energy, outgoing, adventurous, kind, generous, resilient, grounded, and always driven. He would walk any length for ice cream or popcorn. He enjoyed playing Santa Claus at family gatherings, skiing, tennis, running, hiking, travel, and the outdoors in general.

Beloved husband of 55 years to Jean Marie O'Neill (nee Prazen). Bill loved Jeanie fiercely, completely, and without reservation.

Dear brother of Patricia O'Neill of Denver; loving uncle of Jennifer and Matt Becker of Denver, Natalie (Adam) Loops of Chicago, and many others. Fond brother-in-law of Rosalie (Pat) McVay, Joseph (Diane) Prazen, and the late John and Raymond Prazen. Cousin of Edwin Baumann of NY and Bunny Haines of MT.

Also preceded in death by parents James O'Neill and Mildred Viola O'Neill (nee Baumann) and his best friend Queenie the Springer Spaniel.

The family has chosen green cremation. Private family burial of cremated remains at Graceland Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his name to the Nature Conservancy: <https://www.nature.org/en-us/>.

Arrangements by Inclusive Funeral Care, 773-318-1305 or [www.InclusiveFuneralCare.com](http://www.InclusiveFuneralCare.com).

# Cemetery Details

## Graceland Cemetery

4001 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL 60613  
<http://www.gracelandcemetery.org>

# Tribute Wall

LL

“ Sorry to hear about the passing of your husband. He was a lifelong friend of my Dad (Carl Lambrecht) apparently they were in the Boy Scouts together. It was great when the boyhood friends would all meet for lunch until they started to passaway. After awhile, It was down to Bill and my Dad.

*I loved his comment buying a building "a good idea" marrying you "the best idea" (I'm paraphrasing).*

*This is a difficult transition, we too are dealing with it as well. We lost our Mom recently. We are treading on new territory, you are not alone.*

*Apparently Bill was a wicked Monopoly player. :)*

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**Laura Lambrecht** - May 13, 2025 at 09:57 AM

ES

“ My sincere condolences to the family. I remember Bill as an active and helpful member of AYH (American Youth Hostels) back in the 60s.

*Edward Samson*

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**Ed Samson** - May 07, 2025 at 08:34 AM

EL

“ Bonnie and I are so sad on the passing of Bill. A great neighbor and an even better friend.

He was "The Coach" leading us on our Sunday morning group 10-to-15-mile bike rides to have breakfast.

Always a smile, great attitude and he put up with my constant teasing him about everything.

Will miss you Bill. A LOT!

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**Ed & Bonnie Leracz** - May 04, 2025 at 11:43 AM

JB

“ I am so sad to hear about Bill's passing. I worked with him at the Wilcox company many years ago and remember his kindness and free good advice.

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**Janet Borden** - May 04, 2025 at 10:15 AM

BP

“ Never play Monopoly against this guy. He can't be beat.

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**Bryan Prazen** - April 26, 2025 at 03:55 PM