



William Jentes

October 2, 1932 - April 28, 2026

William Robert “Bill” Jentes, born in 1932 in Kalamazoo, Michigan, passed away after a life marked by intellectual brilliance, public service, and deep devotion to family, community, and the arts.

Bill spent his early years moving throughout the Midwest before his family settled in Elmhurst, Illinois, where he graduated from York High School. He went on to attend the University of Michigan, earning both his undergraduate and law degrees. He later served in the United States Navy at Great Lakes where he prized learning how to play bridge while guarding documents.

Bill married Janet Oberg, and together they began their life with a year in Grenoble, France, where he was awarded a Fulbright. Upon returning to Chicago, Bill built a distinguished career in corporate litigation at Kirkland & Ellis. Among his many professional achievements, his work for Westinghouse was recognized in a chapter of James Stewart’s book *The Partners*. In addition to his legal practice, he was a dedicated educator, teaching “Comp Lit” (Complex Litigation) for many years at the law schools of the University of Michigan and the University of Chicago. After retiring from the firm, Bill continued to thrive professionally, establishing a respected career in arbitration and mediation including work in London and India.

Though he loved the law, Bill’s passions extended far beyond his profession.

He was an avid reader and a lover of music, art, theater, tennis, skiing, and sailing. He held a particular affection for Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, Rembrandt, Beethoven and Dvorak. An amateur artist, Bill created remarkable sketches for detailed journals documenting his extensive travels. His commitment to the arts was reflected in his generous support and leadership, especially through his work with the Chicago Shakespeare Theater and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra where he helped the former establish itself at Navy Pier and the latter create Symphony Center. During his time on the board of the Humanities Festival, he organized numerous mock trials to explore contemporary issues and memorably portrayed Plato in the mock trial *State v. Plato: A Case of Assisted Suicide*.

In recent years, Bill's love of Chicago's Lincoln Park inspired him to support extensive tree planting and the restoration of North Pond. He was also deeply concerned about the public health crisis of gun violence and contributed to initiatives that trained street outreach workers in community violence interruption.

Bill was a brilliant and creative thinker with a deep sense of curiosity and adventure. Above all, he was a loving father and grandfather, whose wisdom and generosity will be profoundly missed by all who knew him.

Donations may be made to the Institute for Nonviolence Chicago: <https://www.nonviolencechicago.org/>.

A gathering will be held sometime in the late summer; please check back to this website for information.

Arrangements by Inclusive Funeral Care, 773-318-1305 or www.InclusiveFuneralCare.com.

Tribute Wall

WD

“ I am so sorry to hear this news. I worked with Bill when I was the Sun-Times' classical music critic and Bill was a leader on the Chicago Symphony board. Especially in the mid-1990s when the CSO was refurbishing Orchestra Hall, Bill was always forthcoming whenever I had a question to ask. A gentleman, a true arts lover and--along with his lively wife, Jan--always a pleasure to see Wynne Delacoma.

Wynne Delacoma - June 01 at 04:15 PM

EM

“ Bill was the best. He and Jan did so much to make things happen in Chicago.
Edward Minieka

Edward Minieka - May 03 at 09:35 AM

LA

“ Laszlo lit a candle in memory of William Jentes



Laszlo - April 30 at 11:58 AM