



## T. Michael Bolger

December 23, 1939 - November 29, 2018

Bolger, T. Michael “Mike”

Entered eternal peace at the age of 78 on Thursday, November 29, 2018, after a brief illness with his beloved wife of 50 years Virginia “Ginny” (nee Empey) by his side. He was the proud father of John Michael (Kerry) Bolger and Jennifer Bolger (Enrique) Breceda and devoted and cherished grandfather of Michael, Conley and Charlie Bolger, and Faolan Breceda. He is also survived by his dear sister Bernadette Bolger and sisters-in-law Janet and Linda Bolger. He is now reunited in Heaven with his loving parents, Patrick and Mary (nee McConville) Bolger, and his three brothers Patrick, Victor and Andrew. Mike will be lovingly remembered by his large, Irish, closely knit family of nieces, nephews and many wonderful cousins. He will be also missed by a large network of very close friends and esteemed colleagues.

Mike was born on December 23, 1939, in Minocqua, Wisconsin where his Irish ancestors homesteaded in 1888 and where he met Ginny, the love of his life and best friend, at six months old in their strollers. He felt lucky to grow up in a small town on a lake, and he loved when his extended family would visit “Up North.” He graduated from Minocqua High School in 1957 and from Marquette University in 1961 where he was president of both student bodies. Following the path of many members of his family, Mike set out to become a doctor and was admitted to the Marquette University School of Medicine (now Medical College of Wisconsin). Upon reflection, he instead entered the Jesuits

at St. Boniface Seminary. A true seminarian, Mike championed many social justice causes and marched for civil rights with Father Groppi in the 1960s in Milwaukee. During his time in the Jesuits, he developed a deep moral sense of service to others which flowed through to all his civic and educational endeavors throughout his life. He later left the seminary, married Ginny and had a family, graduated from Northwestern Law School and began his legal career, joining the law firm of Quarles & Brady and becoming one of the nation's leading authorities on health care law.

After 20 years, he left Quarles & Brady to become the fifth president and CEO of the Medical College of Wisconsin. His 20-year tenure as president of MCW is the longest in its history. Under his leadership, the Medical College became one of the nation's leading research institutions. Mike, who also served on MCW's board of trustees, believed that the practice of medicine at its core is a mission of caring for the sick and vulnerable, and he wove that core tenet of careful medicine into the fabric of the administration and education at MCW. He founded the Neurology Board at MCW and served as its first chairman. While serving as president of Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Mike led the \$100 million campaign to create Milwaukee's theater district, chaired the fundraising campaign for Marquette University's student union and established the Milwaukee Academy of Science charter school. He cared deeply for the arts and also believed that the best gift anyone can receive is a good education. His civic awards are numerous, including Marquette University's Alumnus of the Year and the "Vatican II Award for Service to the Church" from the Milwaukee Archdiocese. One of his favorite honors was being selected by MCW students to receive their first annual "Standing Ovation Award" for service to students, now named after him. In 1995, he was named an honorary alumnus by the Medical College of Wisconsin/Marquette Medical Alumni Association. He also received Honorary Degrees from Medical College of Wisconsin, Alverno, Cardinal Stritch and Milwaukee School of Engineering. Mike served on many boards including the Greater Milwaukee Committee, the Better Business Bureau, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of

Commerce, Partners Advancing Values in Education (PAVE), and Mount Mary University. He also served as chairman of the Board of the national Association of Academic Health Centers, a role he was proud of because he was the first lawyer to serve in that capacity.

The eternal scholar, he received his B.A. in philosophy from Marquette University, his M.A. and Ph.L. degrees in Philosophy from St. Louis University, and his J.D. degree with honors from Northwestern University Law School. His spirit was rooted in the Northwoods of Wisconsin where, throughout his life, he made many precious memories with his family and friends on Lakes Minocqua and Katherine. He was a Min-Aqua Bat performing in amateur water ski shows during the summers of his youth. His talent for giving excellent speeches probably began as an announcer at the water ski shows. He loved to return to his "Up North" retreat in the summer. Skiing in the Colorado Rockies with family and friends was a passion of Mike's. Adults and children alike always enjoyed skiing awards from the "Great Mogul," which were channeled through Mike. In spite of his busy work life, Mike always found time to coach his children and participate in their lives--family was always the priority. One of 21 first cousins, who were more like brothers and sisters, his love for keeping the family close and passing on the family lore will be sorely missed.

His enthusiasm, humor and eloquence furthered the mission and goals of so many community projects. He could tell a story and move a crowd with seemingly little effort and a pinch of Irish blarney. Always an optimist, no challenge seemed too big to take on, making Mike a great friend, mentor and confident to many.

Visitation will be held on Thursday, December 6, 2018 from 4:00 to 7:00PM, with a Rosary prayer service beginning at 7:00PM, at Feerick Funeral Home, 2025 E. Capitol Dr., Shorewood, WI 53211. Mass of Christian Burial, celebrating Mike's life of devotion to his family, faith and community, will be held on Friday, December 7, 2018 at 10:30AM at Gesu Church, 1145 W.

Wisconsin Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53233, on the Marquette University campus. A reception will take place following the Mass. An interment ceremony in Minocqua will follow at a later date.

The family requests that memorials in Mike's name be made to the T. Michael Bolger Endowed Parkinson's Research Fund, c/o Medical College of Wisconsin, 8701 Watertown Plank Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53226; the Milwaukee Academy of Science, 2000 W. Kilbourn Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53233; Marquette University, 1250 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53233; or the Milwaukee Repertory Theater, 108 E. Wells St., Milwaukee, WI 53202.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Gathering

AUG 5. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Bolger Cremation & Funeral Services - Minocqua Chapel

212 West Chicago Street

Minocqua, WI 54548

(715) 356-3200

[bolgerfuneral@gmail.com](mailto:bolgerfuneral@gmail.com)

<https://www.bolgerfuneral.com/>

# Tribute Wall

PN

“ *Bernadette and those who remain in Mikes love,*

*I remember our youth when my sister Dianna and I would visit you and your parents after singing at Mass and then your fine family had us two over for a fine dinner on many Sundays. It made such an impression that this community leadership family would treat us so well. That is perhaps how T Michael has accomplish much. May all continue to go with God. Blessings, Phyllis (Van Goethen) Nickchen*

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**Phyllis Nickchen** - December 07, 2018 at 09:05 AM

JS

“ *Kent Smith & Jane (Smith) Mason, are so sorry for your loss. Mike was a wonderful friend & he will be greatly missed. We both enjoyed are many times with him even back to Min -Aqua Bat time, we grew up in the area also. Thank you for sharing him with us.*

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**Jane Mason & Kent Smith** - December 06, 2018 at 04:45 PM

BM

“ *Mike and Sandy and Jan, You're in our thoughts and prayers. I know Mike was a great guy because he was a Bolger. He did a lot for the Medical College of Wisconsin and it was appreciated.*

*Barb and Will Maines*

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**Barb Maines** - December 03, 2018 at 09:18 AM

WI

“ sorry for your loss Michael

*Wip*

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**Wip** - December 03, 2018 at 07:46 AM

JN

“ *My older cousin Mike was also on ski patrol when Squirrel Hill had a rope tow. One icy day, I got stuck on a mogul just before the top. The rope slid through my icy gloves, but I hadn't the strength to turn and jump off. Skiers backed up behind me - until Mike worked his way up so I could lean back against him and we went up to the top together.*

*So Mike! Lending his strength to another so both could move forward!*

*Love always!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*

*Janie Nachazel-Ruck & Ron Ruck*

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**Jane Nachazel** - December 02, 2018 at 03:00 AM

JN

“ *Jane Nachazel lit a candle in memory of T. Michael Bolger*



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**Jane Nachazel** - December 02, 2018 at 02:45 AM