

The Class of '77 lost a bright light with the death of Bill Rockwood on August 4, 2023.

For those who spoke to him since leaving Nobles – at reunions, chance meetings here and there, or planned visits – Bill remained the same person he had been while a student: ever the optimist, a loyal cheerleader, fully engaged with life and laughter, and always willing to share stories of life's adventures and misadventures. He was deeply proud of his family: his wife, Judy; three sons, Kevin, David, and Steven; Steven's wife Cara and Kevin's wife Jeong-in; and two grandchildren, June and Dominic.

After Nobles, Bill earned his BA in Engineering at Dartmouth and went out West to earn his MS at Stanford in Applied Mechanical Engineering. He worked for many years as senior engineer at Trane Corporation, which brought him and his wife, Judy, to Lacrosse, Wisconsin. He received 12 patents while working for Trane.

Recently, I was fortunate to visit Bill and his family after their retirement to rural Mindoro, Wisconsin, where he had designed their house and did much of the finish work himself. Appropriately for a sound engineer whose goal was make industrial equipment as quiet as possible Bill designed and built his own cigar-smoking sanctuary in the basement of his home. The facility was equipped with an HVAC system so quiet and so powerful that the cigar smoke was whisked away, and you could hear a pin drop.

When a group of his classmates learned of his illness last spring, his third bout with cancer, we organized a Zoom call where we had a chance to connect with Bill for what we worried may be the last time. He was his typical upbeat self, reminiscing about our time together. About his impending death, Bill wrote in a Facebook post a few weeks later after learning that the very difficult treatments were not slowing the disease:

“Please know that this is entirely okay. Since this whole thing broke, I have been surrounded by family, and they are keeping me comfortable and continuously amused.... And I am thankful for each of you. Believe me, your avalanche of well-wishes and prayers has been felt. I'm going to bag it up, throw it over my shoulder, and carry it with me to the next adventure. It'll make me light as a feather.”

Bill lived one more month. May we all be blessed with such a deep appreciation and love of life. He will be greatly missed.

Louis Hutchins '77