

DR. WILLIAM J. SCHMIDT  
JULY 22, 1929 – AUGUST 8, 2008



MEMORIAL SERVICE  
CAMP DUDLEY CHAPEL  
Westport, New York  
August 24, 2008

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Placing of Flowers by Willie's Grandchildren

Opening Remarks

Andy Bisselle

Steve Wertimer

Billy Peebles

"Music for Willie"

*Bart Bartholomew  
and Tim Newman*

Ted Smith

Charlie Johnson

"I Would Be True"

*Scott Sylvester*

Don Schmidt

Karen Bartholomew

"I'll Walk Beside You" (*from the 1994 Big Show, "Dear Chief"*)  
*James Mayo, Karen Bartholomew,  
Mary Beth Kilkelly, Mary Law*

Oscar Garfein

Ed Schmidt

Closing Prayer (*adapted by Bill Prior from a traditional  
Franciscan benediction*)  
*Telka Tanneberger-Schmidt and Jack Kilkelly-Schmidt*

When I was eight or nine we lived at The Tilton School, in New Hampshire. My father announced one day that a certain friend of ours had died, and that it therefore obligated me to attend his wake. For reasons unexplained, my mother would not attend, which seemed quite strange. The circumstances surrounding the event are cloudy now, particularly because nobody else in our family went with us and none can confirm it.

We arrived at a cavernous hall outside of town and entered this bandbox of human commotion, both of us in white shirts, worsted grey jackets and ill-conceived neckties. I was skeptical and nervous – some dead guy was in there!

Inside, a raucous panorama. I remember my father's clarification of the scene: "An Irish wake," he said. "Great stuff, great!" I shook hands firmly as instructed, looking each member of the family in the eye. It confused me to have to consider the grief of an adult, while my dad chatted up everyone with breezy familiarity.

We proceeded to a makeshift bar to watch blustering old men throw back draughts of stinking amber sap and get drunk and cry and tell jokes about the deceased and laugh uproariously. I have a vague memory of a Gaelic band and my own sweaty dread at the prospect of being called on to dance. To my relief, I was mercifully ignored.

Later, when we were headed home, my father, ever the educator, said, "See, the Irish, when a guy dies, they throw a party. They don't think about how bad it's gonna be now that he's gone, they think about how great it was while they had him around." That was apparently the lesson, the grounds for taking me there, and I have always wondered what the hell that was all about. Frankly, I'm not convinced my father actually knew the deceased, and I'm not convinced it was an Irish wake; I'm not convinced it was a wake at all! There were no rosaries and no prayers. There was no keening. There was no casket that I

remember, and accordingly, no body. More to the point, my dad's experience of an Irish wake was likely formed by watching Spencer Tracy in "The Last Hurrah" and other similar John Ford pictures. So it either was an Irish wake, or it clearly wasn't. What do I know?

Or rather, I know my father – he was a teacher, but it was more complicated than that. He was pedantic in the ripest, most entertaining, sense of the word. His lessons were hilarious but narrowly-tailored yarns, often prejudicial, self-aggrandizing, and he would go to any length to edify a child, including making stuff up. And I've only realized -- now that I have children of my own – that I do the same thing.

When it comes to matters of mortality, why do we imagine ourselves better than we really are – stronger, kinder, smarter, selfless? Because in the end our imaginations rule us, not the other way around. We are, of necessity, storytellers, fairy tale makers, fiction writers, liars. We are all writing the movie-of-ourselves in the eyes of our children and lovers and parents because we aspire to be the hero in that story. I imagine myself just as my father did. So what if it's not exactly true? It's true.

— Steve Schmidt  
#10875

**I** first met my then future father-in-law in the summer of 1988 when I was dating Ed Schmidt. Willie & Lois were in the New York area for one of Lois's road races. Dr. Schmidt grabbed me by the neck – hard – and said, "I hear you're Catholic!" I felt an electric jolt of joy jump from his fingertips, through my neck, and down my spine. I understood at once where Ed had inherited some of his wit, athleticism, and irreverence, especially for all things Catholic.

Since then I've been blessed to have Willie & Lois as parents-in-law, and as grandparents to our children, Jack and Beatrice. They have

been incredibly loving and generous, and I have loved, and laughed through, every moment spent with them. Jack and Bea have been blessed by their love and attention, and their infectious sense of fun and joy.

Until just a few weeks ago, Willie maintained a sense of urgency in sharing exciting ideas, and making plans to see and do fun things. In the spirit of grabbing you by the neck and sharing the fun, here's a list of fun things recently promoted by Willie.

- Watch "Hopscotch" with Walter Matthau and Glenda Jackson
- Walk over the Brooklyn Bridge (if you are tired, walk to the middle and then back to the base in Brooklyn; that's once over)
- Listen to a Jimmy Rushing CD
- Shop at Fairway in Red Hook and make a day of it by having lunch in back overlooking New York Harbor
- Attend a Friday night bluegrass jam session at a little fireman's hall just over the Tennessee border near Asheville, North Carolina
- Ride the Essex ferry to Charlotte and back with at least one grandchild, then treat everyone to ice cream cones
- Listen to Bob Kindred at a Sunday Brunch at Café Loup
- Visit the dump in Westport and let the grandkids pick up at least one new treasure
- See art by Takashi Murikami
- Eat often at Il Fornetto on Emmons Avenue in Brooklyn, overlooking Sheepshead Bay

Thank you, Willie. I will always be inspired by you and will always feel blessed to be a part of your family.

— Mary Beth Kilkelly

**T**he two things I remember most about my grandfather were his funny grin that always made me smile, and how he would make amusing jokes. One time my grandpa said he wanted to take a picture of my cousin Jack, and me, and he wanted us to hug each other. Jack and I said, “No way!!!” We thought that was gross. Grandpa demanded, “HUG EACH OTHER!” He unfortunately got what he wanted. That’s the kind of person my grandfather was, and when I look at that picture today, all I can think of is: “WOW!”

— *Telka Tanneberger-Schmidt*  
#20351



y favorite part of my grandfather would probably be his

**M**personality. I don’t think there is any other man in the world that will go to the edge of the earth just to make you feel comfortable with him. And there’s no one in the world that will put 100% of his effort just into getting you a tasty creamsicle on a hot summer’s day. He was always able to put a smile on your face no matter what. Even when he was in his final weeks of life, from the facial expressions to the ambition to watch “Young Frankenstein” with me, even though he was in no state to do such a thing, he was always able to put a smile on my face. I’ve heard endless stories about him making everyone happy, even during the darkest times. And this is what makes people love him so much. Most of all, Willie received letters from many of you, saying how much he changed your life. That’s why I love Willie Schmidt.

— *Jack Kilkelly-Schmidt*  
#19960

**M**y first “religious encounter” with Willie was when he was teaching catechism when I was in high school, giving a lesson on Arnold Toynbee! Figure that. And then a few years later my biggest introduction to the Schmidt family was when he invited me to the Barnum and Bailey circus with the family, since his son Steve was too embarrassed to ask. Well, I think that the show was more the Willie and Bill (Prior) show, the true clowns of the day.

That adventure turned out for the best in the long run, thanks to you, Willie! You were always a man of cheerful introductions whether you were with family, friend, or a stranger. Since these beginnings, the years have brought many things that I will miss. . .

- Brunches and dinners – feigning shock when the check arrived and

then the banter of who would pay . . . “OK Willie, we’ll let you pay this time!”

- Encouragement to play piano, which you had always wanted to play, and you yelling from a distance “Oh play, Strangers in the Night again!”
- Advice during my difficulty at work – “Screw ‘em!”
- Greeting of flowers and “Heh Stever . . . Heh Mary Baby! . . . How are you, you little squirt?”
- Cocktails on the Ainger Hill Cottage deck – “What’ll it be, a Daddy Jack or a Martini?”
- Earrings for special holidays or events – “Mary will love these!”
- Political banter and buttons – “1/20/09”
- Family trips to California and 4 generations in a van to Maine.
- Clicking chalices with Lois during the Christmas service and then taking a small reprieve to Veniero’s – “Pleasurable”
- Backrubs . . . – “Oh Oh, on the shoulder” . . . or “better than sex!”
- Postcards and Pictures galore – “Look at your ‘ol man crossing the Brooklyn Bridge at 78!”



I was so glad to be with you on your last day. How strange it was when the sun shone brightly while the rain came pouring down and then the amazing rainbow followed, one hour before your death. You are no stranger anymore – not even to the angels and the Prince of Peace.

— Mary Tanneberger  
#14251

**T**here was something about getting behind the wheel of a car that brought out Dad’s true colors.

### **He was frugal.**

Dad survived the depression so if presented with the chance to save a buck, he would. Like the time he asked me to hide Donny, who was a toddler, and myself under a blanket to save money at a toll crossing.

### **He was funny.**

When we drove past golf courses, ideally ones full of ‘rich preppy bastards,’ Dad would pull the car over, lower the windows and insist we kids yell ‘Duffer!’ at the exact moment the guy was at the top of his swing. Then Dad would peel back out onto the road, turn to us and say, “Hot baby!”

### **He was competitive.**

When Dad drove past joggers, regardless of age, sex or physical condition, he’d announce with total conviction, ‘I could take him.’ One time Doug pointed out that the guy had an artificial leg. Dad’s response? “Dougie, I could woop him.”

— Beth Schmidt  
#13405

## REMEMBRANCES FROM WILLIE'S MEMORIAL SERVICE AUGUST 24, 2008

**F**or many of the Dudley folks in this audience, myself included, Willie was one of our heroes. If Camp Dudley stands for a life that is fun while doing good, nobody, in their lifetime, had more fun and did more good than our beloved Willie...what a life it was!

With his wonderful wife Lois at his side, they opened their home and their hearts to us all for 54 years. Thank you, Lois!

And, to the Schmidt children, Steve, Doug, Ed, Beth and Don, thank you for sharing your Dad with us!

Willie's impact on Dudleyites was enormous. Please consider the following: The first camper Willie admitted to Dudley in 1975 had a camp number in the mid-11,000's; the last camper in 1994, was in the mid-16,000's; and with the (occasional) help of a strategically placed nametag, he knew the name and background of every one of these boys. The scholarship budget was \$25,000 when Willie started. It grew to \$250,000 by his last year, and today has grown to over \$500,000, in his honor. This has enabled "Other Fellows" from all walks of life to enjoy the Dudley experience.

In one of his last mass vespers at Dudley, pre-season 2007, Willie anticipated one aspect of his legacy when he said to the leaders in rapid fire, trademark Willie form: "You, jerks! Who's with the kids?! I'm not gonna make that call...I'm really not. YOUR JOB is to keep each kid safe and to help them find success...go to it!" We all remember so many of Willie's words.

Through the years, Willie offered some timeless advice to parents as well. For example, on receiving their sons' trunks back home after a summer at Dudley, three tips from Willie:

#1 Never, I repeat, NEVER open the trunk indoors; always outside the house, free and clear of any litigious neighbors!

#2 Take the top two layers of clothes out of the trunk, and burn them!

#3 Take the bottom layers of stuff remaining and put them directly back in the drawer! It's a safe bet that they've never been touched!

As we all know, Willie had a knack for creating fun, even in seemingly routine situations.

Like the time Willie invited Jack Mingle to join him on his nightly rounds to the cabins to say, "Good night." The pair worked their way through the Cub division and headed toward the Swim Point cabin area. All the while, Willie was urging Jack to take a turn and say, "Good night," himself. Jack declined for a time, but then finally agreed to take a shot at it. "Great," Willie said as they approached the next cabin, whose sign was out of view. "It's Yale, go to it." So, Jack opened the door and shouted his best, "Good night, Yale!" To Jack's surprise, the kids in the cabin immediately hung their heads, prompting Jack to turn to Willie for some explanation, only to find Willie with his trademark, "I gotcha" look on his face. You see, it was Princeton Lodge, not Yale! That was Willie – ever playful, always fun to be around.

On a personal note: Willie was incredibly generous – with his time and wisdom – in support of me as Director. For that and so much more, I'll never forget Camper #7405. Good night, Willie.

— Andy Bisselle  
#12141

**N**ever was a man more enamored of his own buttocks. Let's face it, one of the things Willie will be remembered for among those of us of a certain age is the uncanny habit he had of allowing himself to be discovered in completely unexpected places at often very inopportune moments in a manner that found him... disarmingly casual. Now when you encountered Willie during one of these... moments, interrupted in whatever task you were performing, there you were, slack-jawed, speechless, and left simply to ponder the fact that you had, literally, become the butt of Willie's joke.

And then, just like that, he'd be gone.

Because Willie gotcha. He just ... he got you.

Now I don't mean to be irreverent, I'm not going to turn this into a Willie Roast, but hey, it wouldn't be a Schmidt production without at least a dash of irreverence.

I did hear that when discussion of a service like this came up with Willie, he became very excited, even going so far as to suggest that there be multiple services, one here, one in Short Hills and, hey, maybe one on the West Coast. Willie cast his net pretty wide. This reminded me of my father, Sidney Wertimer, who planned out his own memorial service down to the fine details some twenty years before he died. My dad and Willie knew each other glancingly; they were alike in many ways, both loved by a large and loyal cadre of admirers and mentees. When Dad died about three and a half years ago, we executed his memorial service by following the blueprint he had created which he called "Suggestions for the Ultimate Eventuality." One of Sid's instructions read, "No eulogies; my name not to be mentioned. If they don't know why they are there, don't tell them." Well, we all know why we're here, and I don't think Willie would mind a few dozen eulogies.

My dad and Willie were both teachers. Teaching is a great job; I think it's the most important job in the world, teaching our children. We think of Willie as being the director of Camp Dudley, which he was for twenty years, but before and after that, Willie was a teacher, and at great schools: Tilton in New Hampshire and Wayland Academy in Wisconsin, and later at the Asheville School in North Carolina. But even during his years here at camp, more than just an administrator, I think of Willie as a teacher.

He loved the sport of basketball, and any time he walked by the courts, the instructor in him came out. "Hey kid, why're you always dribbling? Look to pass first, only dribble if you need to."

Willie taught lessons here at Dudley during cabin vespers and mass vespers and chapel talks, but less obviously he taught us lessons when he'd pull us aside one-on-one or talk to us in small groups. His method was Socratic; he asked us questions, questions we often found difficult to answer, but that made us think. I remember many times looking at Willie across his impossibly cluttered desk and having him ask me something like, "You know, such-and-such is starting to go on here at Camp Dudley, and a lot of people don't like it. Who's right, who's wrong? What do you think we should do?" Not only was Willie testing me, getting me to form an opinion, but also he was subtly seeking my input, trying to get a younger take on what was going on. He did this with all of us. It kept his decision-making fresh and gave him perspective on a rapidly changing society, changes he sometimes didn't like, but to which he knew he might have to adapt. This Socratic method of his, this back-and-forth teaching, allowed Willie to keep up with the times and roll with the punches, while still hewing to his moral bottom line.

And so Willie taught us. He passed on his life lessons: that nothing comes without hard work, that there was a time and a place for everything, and especially, that regardless of their family's adjusted gross income, not only did everyone have the ability to find some success in

their lives, but that it was actually their right. And that was where we came in, as leaders, to help boys, and later, to help people, find success. Willie wore a lot of hats. He was a coach and trainer, an historian, a movie buff (or as Steve would say, a cinephile), a marathoner, an amateur magician, an exhibitionist. But I'll always remember Willie as a teacher. I never took a course from the guy; never spent a minute in one of his classrooms, but Willie Schmidt taught me plenty. He got me.

— *Steve Wertimer*  
#10649

**M**y wife Penny and I consider it one of the great blessings of our lives that we had the chance to live at Asheville School with Lois and Willie and to work with them for eight years!

During Willie's first few days at Asheville school in the summer of 1994, veteran faculty member (and unreconstructed southerner) Ron Bromley approached Willie and said: "Willie, you're not too bad for a Yankee but if you start telling us what to do, you'll be a damn Yankee to us!" Well, Willie became a "damn Yankee" and we loved him for it!

It was the fall of 1993 and I received a letter from Willie along with his extraordinary resume indicating an interest in teaching at Asheville School. Because Willie knew so many school people around the country, I am sure that I was one of literally a hundred school heads to receive such a letter. His resume, of course, was impressive—PhD in American History, licensed physical therapist, teaching experience at two great schools plus having run Camp Dudley so very successfully for twenty years! Dr. John Russell—Rusty to you Camp Dudley alumni and a wonderful friend to Asheville School—told me about Willie and I shall be forever grateful to John for introducing Willie Schmidt and Asheville School to one another. But frankly, at the time I received the letter from Willie, it looked very unlikely that we would have a

place for him. We were doing some belt-tightening and we just didn't have a full-time opening in our History department. Then the letters began to roll in from all over the country in support of Willie's candidacy. No one had a Rolodex like Willie!

In the winter of 1994, a prospective family was visiting Asheville School from Florida and when the father heard that Willie Schmidt was a possible candidate for a job at Asheville School, he looked me in the eye and said: "Billy, if Willie Schmidt is coming to Asheville School, you can bet my son will be on your doorstep!" Well, that got my attention. In February, Jay Bonner, Associate Head of School at Asheville School and here now representing the school, attended an NAIS conference in Orlando, Florida and was hoping to meet with Willie. Willie reached Jay by phone (they were staying in the same hotel) and essentially said to Jay, "You guys at Asheville School need to hire me." Jay politely said "Okay, but maybe we should perhaps first meet before we make a decision." Willie's response: "I'll be right up" and he came to Jay's room in five minutes.

Jay returned to Asheville School and frankly was scratching his head a little bit about Willie. He said to me that his resume was incredibly impressive and obviously he loved young people but frankly—Jay said—"Willie can be a bit pushy." Finally, I called Willie and said that we would like him to visit us for an interview and that we would split the airfare with him. If we ended up hiring him, we would take care of the other half as well. Willie said, "Deal."

And the rest is history. Willie threw himself into all aspects of school life and was incredibly beloved by all who worked with him. At age 65, he not only was willing to live on-dorm but wanted to live on-dorm. I was scratching my head then. After several years in the dorm, a nice off-campus spot became available and he really didn't want to move but Lois and I insisted and Lois, as I remember, you and I pretty much had to move Willie out in the dead of the night.

Willie would say things to kids that most of us would get sued for saying — “jerk,” “nerd,” “you are obnoxious!” All the while he was saying this, he would have his arm around the poor kid signaling his unconditional love for this youngster whom he had just brought up short.

Willie ran a heck-of-an American History class. His energy and enthusiasm were contagious and he got kids passionately involved in his class discussions. He used a kind of “Socratic method” but only to a point. One day, he asked a student a question and this particular kid got a little too wordy and Willie stopped him abruptly and said, “Kid, you need to remember one thing—there is only one star in this class and it ain’t you!” That was vintage Willie.

But Willie’s greatest gift to Asheville School (and to all of us who come in contact with him) was this unconditional love that sought absolutely nothing in return. It is because of this unconditional love from him and Lois to all those around them that Penny and I feel so blessed to call the Schmidts friends. What a grace-filled gift they gave the Asheville School community!

— *Billy Peebles*

**I** stand before you this morning honored, humbled, and intimidated. I represent a generation of Dudleyites whose Dudley experience, as campers and leaders, was solely under the directorship of Willie Schmidt. During Willie’s twenty years at the helm, we came in as untamed cubs and left as confident leaders under his guidance. I have found it impossible to capture Willie in words, so to help gather my thoughts for today, I have relied heavily on my Dudley contemporaries as I asked for their reflections on Willie, and I appreciate their support as their voices join mine this morning. The key theme from those conversations was that time spent with

Willie was precious-- something we all cherished. Add Lois to the mix and I was elated to welcome the Schmidts to Paris in the spring of 1994 for the first and last Dudley reunion in Paris—truth be told, there were not a whole lot of Dudleyites living there at the time so I think Willie just wanted a trip to France on Camp’s buck. One thing that immediately struck me back then is that Willie was the same person during the Camp season in Westport as he was during Leaders Luncheon in New Jersey as he was in the streets of Paris. He brought energy to every situation, and he was impossible to keep up with. Likewise, he treated every person the same, from ill-behaved Cubs to uptight parents to his cronies from back in the day. In Paris, he even gave the notoriously stiff French waiters a run for their money. Using bad French, wild hand gestures, and rolling eyes, Willie Schmidt was able to disarm those arrogant waiters with his humor, bringing a smile to the tightest of mouths in France, just as I’d seen him do so many times with homesick Plebes. Rich Egan wrote: “What strikes me most about Willie is how he spoke to 10 year old boys the same way he spoke to 65 year old men, friend or foe. He humanized me and thousands and thousands of other people. Once you are humanized you have to start taking responsibility for yourself, which is a solid step in becoming a man.”

So I asked Willie and Lois what they wanted to visit first—Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower, the Impressionist paintings—I’d bring them anywhere and show them around. And where do you think Willie wanted to go first? Ever the student of history, Dr. Schmidt’s priority was the National Military Museum. So there we went, and I was quickly transformed from tour guide to tourist, scrambling around the museum after Willie as he recited facts and dates. Lois and I could barely keep up and we ultimately sent Willie off muttering to himself and tapping the glass of the various exhibits.

Later that week, we had the first ever Parisian Reunion. And if you never attended a Dudley Reunion with Willie at the helm, you missed a remarkable showcase of his talents. As Tony Verbeck put it: “In

retrospect, I can now appreciate how much of Willie's greatness as a person was wrapped up in the slide show. In those 30 minutes, Willie was simultaneously a salesman and an entertainer, but also a father, a nurturer, and a leader. By the end of the reunion, he generally had convinced 90% of the adults in the room that putting their children in his care for 4 or 8 weeks was not only a good idea, but a great idea."

So in Paris, I was settling into another Schmidt performance, eager to see how the French took to him, when Willie cued up the first slide. And he starts with one joke or another—it could have been the slide of the tank as Willie said, "we have War Games", or perhaps the always classic "Skydiving is one of our favorite activities!" when it occurred to Willie that the French people were not understanding him. The room was pretty quiet. Without prior notice, Willie shouts out, "Smith, you've got to translate!" And of course, that was the only pause he took for the rest of the show so again I found myself scrambling to keep up and translate words like "stain" and "ear lobes" and "Stacey Brook Country Club" into French.

After Willie received a cool reception to his presentation for probably the first and only time in his life, I walked over to him and we both started laughing. I don't remember exactly what he said, but it was probably something along the lines of, "Well, that went over well, geez? Ah, so what, I never liked that kid Philippe Chaudet anyways! But you know, his dad is a nice fella" and then Willie went off on another tangent. Perhaps the greatest flop in his career on the reunion trail and Willie had brushed it off in five seconds. Rex Corbett wrote to me about Willie's most memorable advice to him: Willie's words to Rex were, "if something bad happens to you in your life, you can feel sorry for yourself for one day.....and then move on." Rex continued, "Willie was a very compassionate man, but he was also incredibly mentally tough. He wouldn't allow you to play the victim and he made us all tougher because of it."

Several months later, the summer of 1994 arrived--Willie's last summer as the Director of Dudley--which basically turned into a pilgrimage for my generation, the disciples of Willie. People made serious sacrifices to be at camp—they quit their jobs, left their families, and changed their plans as we all made the mecca to Westport for a final piece of the Schmidt magic. And he delivered. Amidst constant cheers of "five more years!" and tee-shirts that blazed a Yogi Berra-esque quote from Willie which read: "If you weren't here, you wouldn't be here," Willie's last stand at Dudley was two months of pure bliss for the campers, leaders and staff alike.

And why did so many of us keep returning every summer under Willie? In part, because Willie Schmidt was the most remarkable leader most of us had ever experienced. Pat Butler said, "Willie believed it was his duty to look past the obvious faces in the front row and find the boys who were struggling. With the right mix of optimism, patience, and faith, Willie knew he could unlock lasting change in the kids who needed it most. Willie gave you the motivation and the space to toss out your old destiny and rewrite yourself a better one." What an incredible reflection from Pat on the serious side of Willie Schmidt.

But we also returned so many summers because a 60 year old man would still get up in front of a bunch of pre-teen campers and look ridiculous doing ear exercises on the 4th of July. A man who should have been tired from 20 years on the road, and two months of 18 hour days and sleepless nights still had more energy than all of us. Willie alternated between oozing spirit and commanding respect. I think that Beckman Hall, the Dudley dining hall, was Willie's favorite place during the season. With every Dudleyite under one roof, it was a quick dose of spirituality from a chapel talk or prayer, a meal together as a Dudley family, and then utter chaos as the chanting and singing broke out. And Willie loved every second of it.

Finally, we kept returning to Dudley because we took our lead from Willie and Lois, who stuck with what brought them the most joy in life. Working with kids. Being on Lake Champlain. Being at Dudley.

Willie's last day of camp ever as Director, in 1994, nobody knew what to do—we were despondent. Rather than mope around, we brought out our instruments, plugged them in and began to play (pretty loudly!) as cars were pulling out of camp heading south. Willie comes over to where we were playing and we did not know how he'd react—this was not a typical way to end camp and we had not asked his permission. So he let's us finish a song and we think he might pull the plug on us, but instead he jumps up on stage with us and sings words he did not know and pretended to play the harmonica into the mic. In his last minutes as Director of Dudley . . .

After Willie left camp, we kept visiting Dudley every summer, and we always tried to get some face time with Willie. The last time, two summers ago, there must have been 15 of us who went to see Willie and Lois at their home here in Westport. Predictably, Willie didn't even tell Lois we were coming. And predictably, Lois was charming and generous. But as we piled out, Willie greeted every single one of us by name and, off the top of his head, asked us something about our jobs or hometown or family or friends. We were certainly thrilled to see him, but more importantly, we were thrilled that he was happy to see us. As Jason Lynch commented to me, "I always felt special not because I knew Willie, but because he knew me."

I am heartened today knowing that Willie's influence is going to be long-lasting, and certainly in this little corner of the world where we gather today, truly EVER-lasting. And if we have any doubt about that legacy, we need look no further than the Schmidt family. Lois, Steve, Doug, Beth, Ed, and Don, along with 9 grandchildren, carry Willie's torch, each in their own way. A month ago, I dropped off my daughter at Camp Dudley at Kiniya and I just missed seeing Willie for what would have been the last time. But, as fate would have it, a

month later at pickup over at Kiniya, I had the wonderful opportunity to wait out a rainstorm on a porch with Lois and her granddaughters, Zoe and Hannah McPheron. These girls are total kooks! Fifteen minutes of laughter later, I walked out in the wet grass on the other side of the lake so heartened that the Schmidt legacy would march on. So to the family, I say thank you on behalf of everyone here. I imagine that to some degree, our gain was your sacrifice as your husband, father, and grandfather was so influential in other people's lives.

John Wooden, the all-time great UCLA basketball coach, wrote: "Leadership is the ability to get individuals to work together for the common good and the best possible results while at the same time letting them know they did it themselves." Willie never told us how to run things. He did not treat us like he was our boss. Rather, he was our leader. Coach Wooden finished that quote by stating simply: "A leader's most powerful ally is his or her own example." If nothing else, Willie's set an example that showed us how to love life, laugh, embrace the good and face the bad, how to get the masses moving in one positive direction, and above all, how to have fun. His spirit and influence will be EVER lasting!

— Ted Smith  
#12664

I remember when Lois had preached in the Chapel several years ago and had been excellent. At the end of that service, I told her (and Willie) that I would nominate her for "sainthood" and not just for her preaching ability, and that a number of people I knew would second that motion. You can judge for yourself what I meant.

In thinking about the article printed in the *CDA News* about the all-time basketball team from Camp Dudley, I had called Willie recently

to express to him that both Pete Willmott and I would have nominated him to the first-string all-offensive team (he was happy with that), but that for the same reason that Willmott did not make the starting five (No D), he and Eddie did not make the cut.

I treasure the many private conversations I had over the years with Willie, both as Board Chair, and host of the Dudley Reunion in Washington, and more importantly as my first leader in 1951, and as his friend. Willie was never at a loss for words or opinions, and from time to time he expressed real insights! One consistent theme in many of our conversations was his friendship with Doug Foster, my second leader in 1952, whom Willie loved dearly

I remember Willie's visits to D.C. for the many years of camp reunions. His annual visits to the Capitol became legendary. On one occasion the entire staff of the House Appropriations Committee greeted him wearing the Dudley painter caps and chanting "D-U-D-L-E-Y, whitewash cookies, chicken pie." Willie was impressed, and began to "strut" around the Capitol imagining his own self-importance. We went into Speaker Tip O'Neill's office where the two of them spent a half hour talking about camping (Tip knew something about it) at which point Willie presented him with a Camp Dudley necktie, and Tip responded, "Thanks Willie, I have always wanted a District of Columbia necktie." (Eddie reminded me later that Willie then went into Tip's private bathroom and stole his comb).

Then we proceeded into the Old Senate Chamber where Willie proceeded to regale all within earshot about the "caning" of Senator Sumner, a staunch abolitionist, by Rep. "Bully" Brooks, later identified to me as being from South Carolina, leading up to the Civil War. At that point, Willie was confronted by the Capitol Tour Guide on duty in the Chamber, who proceeded to correct him on some of his "facts." After a discussion, they agreed to disagree and to exchange information subsequently. That never happened. At that point, I mentioned

to Bill Peeples from Ashville School that Willie may have subsequently been teaching "revisionist" history in the classroom. The important thing was that he was IN the classroom.

He became very close to the late Rev. Jim Ford, Chaplain of the House of Representatives and 13 times a preacher in this Chapel. Ford was honored by Andy with the camp number #18233, after having received a number of neckties from Willie. One time Jim reminded the Dudley worshipers that, "Text without context is pretext," perhaps advice to Willie, but also advice that Cubs understood.

Finally, Willie's Doctoral degree in History was unique — PhD as an acronym. P was for passion; H for humor; and D for dedication, and devotion to diversity.

In 1994 when I was fortunate to have been one of those paying tribute to Willie upon his retirement as Director, Willie was then, and remains today, a "moral compass" for us all.

— *Charlie Johnson*  
#8252

**W**hen Steve Schmidt asked me to help plan the music for Willie's memorial service, I was pleased to be involved. Willie meant so much to me and was a huge influence on me. But when Steve further asked if I would be willing to speak, I was honored to be given the opportunity to share my thoughts on Willie and his role in bringing women into a more prominent role at Camp Dudley. The following remarks are reconstructed from memory, as I spoke extemporaneously, and from my heart.

I am honored to have been asked to speak today. What a great tribute! All the stories and laughter. Willie would have loved it. He always made people feel good, and he's still making us laugh!

My first summer at Camp was 1981, but Willie didn't actually find me. Bob Kindred did, through a mutual friend. Bart and I were both hired: two for the price of one! I remember standing in front of the staff at the orientation meeting, and saying, "I'm scared sh\*&less!" And I was. I'd never worked in an all-male environment, and I had no idea what I was getting myself into. But Willie was great. He made me feel that I could do the job. He believed in me and that gave me confidence.

His kids might disagree with me on this, but Willie was also a great listener. He never made decisions without consulting a number of people, considering their advice, and finally making his own judgement. As an educator, I found this an invaluable model. When I needed advice, it was Willie I consulted. He was a surrogate father to me.

He knew how to bring out the best in people. He was so supportive. For those of you who know about education, Howard Gardner wrote about the Seven Intelligences, one of which is Interpersonal. I think that was Willie's strongest intelligence. He had a Ph.D. in history, but his real strength, in my opinion, was his ability to connect with people.

There's a group of us that gets together every year for a Superbowl party in New York: Ed and Steve and their families. This year we were at Mary Law & Les Barni's, and one of Mary's students was there. Willie immediately started asking her questions about what she was studying and where she was from. What amazed me was that there was no reason for him to do that. He was probably never going to see her again. Why did he bother? That was just him. He HAD to connect to people, no matter who, no matter where.

Willie decided it was important to make women more visible at Camp. I knew that had not always been the case. I heard stories about how women were not even allowed on Campus in prior years. Now, I happened to have daughters, and it was not easy for them. In fact, they still talk about Willie's "hormone talk." Every girl got the "hormone talk." Willie was aware of the potential problems! But he went out of his way to make the female staff feel welcome.

I remember the banquet of my first summer. Willie gave every female staff member a flower. It was a gesture to make us feel special. He didn't need to do that, but he knew it was important to integrate women into the Camp environment carefully and sensitively. Eventually, those gestures were not necessary. We were accepted as equal staff members.

I can honestly say that I am who I am today largely because of having known Willie Schmidt.

— Karen Bartholomew  
#13322

**W**illie was the most extraordinary man I have ever met in my life. I suspect that most of us feel that he was the most extraordinary man in our lives. We all knew Willie in the same way and we all knew him differently. Everyone here has multiple Willie stories. I have many but I will tell you about my 3 favorites. The first starts when I first met him in the CCU (Coronarhy Care Unit), after his first heart attack. He always chortled when he told people, "...I said, Listen Doc, you take good care of me and I'll get you the best summer job ever."

The second starts several days later during one of my visits to him on the floor after the CCU stay. I had instructed him to rest and yet I

found him sitting up in bed, furiously clicking slides on a projector and watching the images on the wall. Although this wasn't physical work I thought the intensity might not be good for him. As Willie told the story "So Oscar said, I want you to rest, relax, take it easy . . . Hey — that looks pretty good, that's what the camp looks like, hmmm!!" and I knew I had him hooked."

The third story relates to how and what Willie taught me. During one of my first stays as camp doctor I learned that something very hurtful, politically and professionally, happened to me at my hospital. I was very upset. I mentioned just a bit about it to Willie, without the specifics. Later that evening, Lois and Willie showed up at our cabin with a pitcher full of his special whiskey sours, and proceeded to entertain us and lighten up the evening. He never once mentioned the hospital, or offered words of encouragement or support. Lois' and his presence did it all. It was just a fun visit. Jokes, and laughter, and gossip and kind ribbing. I have remembered this in word and in my behavior ever since. Being distracted and cared for in moments of trouble is the most any of us can expect and distracting and caring for others is often the most any of us can do to help soothe the pain of troubles or loss. Willie knew this and did this so well.

Given the profound sadness of Willie's loss and remembering stories like these, how can we try to make sense of something that is at its basis incomprehensible? How do we understand a world without our loved one, our friend, our caretaker?

We can approach these questions rationally and say that he had a full and productive life, that his end was relatively swift, that he left a unique legacy of love and respect and admiration. We all know that death is part of life. But somehow, all that, while it is reasonable and thoughtful, doesn't quite help us deal with the pain and loss. So we resort to myth and magic.

The Jews of medieval Central Europe told a mystical tale of the Truly Just. The world, they posited, was filled with evil. So much existed that without a countervailing force for Good, the evil would consume the world. To prevent this, in every generation God created the Truly Just, 36 saintly souls who were so good that they, all by themselves, absorbed and buffered the badness of the rest of the world. As a measure of their powers of goodness, it was believed that if even one died without replacement, the world would instantly be consumed by fire. So perhaps, in this mythical and mystical way, we can understand the incomprehensible and take solace. Willie was truly good and just and created warmth and happiness wherever he went. It just may help to believe that when Willie passed on to his eternal reward, another Willie, another saintly person, another of the Truly Just, was born somewhere in this world and will work his or her magic to make the world a better place and enrich the lives of those around.

That makes sense to me. May God rest his soul.

— Oscar Garfein  
#12690

**A**t 7:28 on the evening of August 8, 2008, my father's heart stopped. It was a heart that had first broken down around mile 7 of the New York City Marathon and had been patched together and in disrepair for nearly thirty years. Willie had been asthmatic since childhood, he had colitis, cataracts, osteoarthritis, and multiple myeloma. As my mother left the hospital room later that night, a nurse asked her if there were any body parts that Willie could donate. She paused for about a second and said, "None." Nothing was salvageable. He was a wreck. He had used his body up.

Several times during Willie's final weeks, people said, with the best

intentions, “You have to realize, it’s not your father.” Even one of the nurses that night said, “It’s not him.” But it was him. As long as his body was there, it was him. When I arrived with my family, fifteen minutes after he’d died, his hand was still warm to the touch. An hour later, as we prepared to file out of the hospital room, my son went back in and held Willie’s arm and caressed his forehead. That was no abstraction; that was his grandfather. Willie’s body was not a vessel for some soul or spirit or metaphorical heart. I don’t believe it, and he certainly didn’t. Not once in his final hours, days, weeks, months, years even did Willie talk about God or a soul or heaven. No foxhole convert was he. Willie lived in his body, through his body, on this earth, in our time.

Few people in this audience, I would guess, were not touched, held, grabbed, jostled, smacked, shaken, hugged, or kissed by my father. He was nearly incapable of having a conversation without making physical contact. He invaded your space – expansively, unself-consciously. You knew when Willie was in the room. His physical presence was palpable. He often said, “My father never put an arm around me,” by way of explaining his own overt physicality. That seems a little too neat an explanation for me, but it was good enough for Will. He was a practical man. He had no time for grand, complicated theories.

Ralph LaRovere tells the story of two years after Willie had asked Ralph to leave Dudley mid-summer for – how should I say this? – a lapse in judgment. Ralph was at home, preparing to go to a nearby Dudley reunion. He was nervous, uncertain how the Director would greet him, hoping that if Willie didn’t actually offer forgiveness, he’d at least act as if the incident had never occurred and the Canadian boats hadn’t drifted into the middle of Lake Champlain. Ralph had just stepped out of the shower and was naked and dripping wet – picture that – when his bedroom door burst open and Willie, fully clothed, shouted, “Ralphie!,” rushed in and threw his arms around his

friend. These days, everybody hugs their kids, but only Willie hugged everybody else’s kids, too.

It’s no exaggeration to say that Willie was obsessed with his body. Consumed by it. At home, it’s often all he talked about. Where most people might answer, “How are you?” with “Fine,” for Willie the question was an invitation to list his infirmities, actual and imagined, from head to toe. No wonder many of his best friends were doctors – they could obsess over his body, too. Most of my phone conversations with him began, “I’m sitting here with your mother.” He had to place his body in space, in relation to other bodies, before the conversation could begin.

Even his intellectual pursuits had a muscular quality. He didn’t read, he skimmed. He raced through books. He was an indiscriminate underliner. As a historian, he had no theories; he could tell you what the competing theories were – who argued what, when, in which book – but he was not an original thinker or an intellectual or a philosopher. The classes he taught were more professional wrestling match than lecture. A stupid answer could easily elicit a smack on the head or an eraser thrown across the room.

He gave advice and made decisions quickly, confidently, definitively. He didn’t waver. He rarely slept on anything. He never worked from a script. He made up his mind and he acted. He threw the door open and rushed in. Even this, this reaching for metaphor, Willie would have found irrelevant, a waste of time.

Everyone talks about his spirit, his sense of humor, his enthusiasm and sincerity and generosity and empathy and love of life. All of which is true, and all of which he expressed with his body. He embraced unconditionally. His best friends – his closest, dearest friends – ranged from Barry Goldwater Republicans to Che Guevara Democrats. To

Willie, you weren't a collection of political beliefs or opinions or values or even personality traits. You were another human being within arm's reach; that was enough for him to call you friend.

I sat in on one of his classes at Asheville and was amazed by the ease with which teenage boys and girls draped their arms over his shoulder, the honest and casual way he expressed himself physically and the freedom he gave others to do the same. I envied those students. I couldn't think of any older person in my life with whom I'd ever had that kind of physical rapport. Except, of course, my father.

As much as he avoided mentioning this, was even embarrassed by it, Willie's undergraduate degree was in phys ed. He was a natural athlete, especially on the basketball court, where he was a skillful and tenacious competitor. A week or so before he died, when he could manage only a few coherent, lucid sentences a day, I reminded him that, in the 50's, he'd played against Wilt Chamberlain in a summer league. "I scored 28 that night," he said. I asked him who was the best player he'd ever faced at Dudley, rattling off the usual suspects. "Alf Kammerlain?" "Not bad," he said. "Bruce Gherke?" "The Gherk was tough." "Buckets Montgomery?" "Ooh," Willie said, "Buckets was good." And then I set him up with a straight line: "What about Ben Nelson?" Willie's eyes opened wide, he propped himself on an elbow, leaned toward me, and whispered, "I could take Nelson with one arm."

Willie's first graduate degree, before he earned a Master's and a PhD in American History, was in physical therapy from the Medical College of Virginia, which is also where he met my mother. He was a trainer everywhere he worked. Only the oldest timers here, the pre-Dudley-ites, those who knew him as Bill or Doc, remember the man whose uniform was khakis and a white t-shirt and Chuck Taylors and a baseball cap with a C or a T or a W, and a roll of athletic tape clenched between his teeth. Watching Willie tape an ankle was like watching Keith Haring paint a wall – he was fast, instinctive, flawless, poetic.

In the last few weeks, when Willie had trouble getting out of bed under his own power, he confounded the nurses – and his wife – by constantly swinging his legs over the side rails and trying to get out. The fact that his body was nearly useless frustrated the hell out of him. He could not sit still. He was so restless he sometimes went days without sleeping. He'd sit in his bed, agitated, immobile, look at whoever happened to be in the room, and, like a character in a Beckett play, announce, "All right! Let's go."

Willie did finally go. He's gone. Two weeks ago, his heart stopped. A day later he was cremated. His body is gone. Used up. He left behind little of tangible value. Only memories, influence, legacy. It's not nearly enough, but it'll have to do. You knew when Willie was in the room. His physical presence was palpable. Somehow – don't ask me how – the feeling of his absence, at least for now, is nearly as acute.

We are all naked and sopping wet, in our way, vulnerable, yearning for forgiveness, direction, love. Who among us – child or adult – doesn't want, doesn't need, someone to fling the door open, shout our name, rush in, throw his arms around us, and call us friend? Not a metaphorical embrace, but a real bear hug, one that takes your breath away. Willie was right: he could take Ben Nelson with one arm; he took the rest of us with the other arm.

— *Ed Schmidt*  
#11260

**F**riendly, joyful, a sense of humor and a funny story  
– that was the Willie, Doc, Coach, or Bill many knew.

Serious, driven to accomplish, always learning, sincere,  
loving, and caring – “That was my Bill.”

He loved Dudley, his teaching, his many friends and his family. He dedicated his life to developing leadership and integrity in young people and young adults. He encouraged them to always be open to learning and to give their very best to the betterment of society. He was never judgmental.

He was a living example of love. He never cared about taking. He only gave and never stopped giving. He influenced our lives and we in turn should do the same by passing on his gifts to others.

Willie will always be in our hearts. He will be missed by so many whose lives he touched. He will be especially missed by his loving family and wife who shared 54 years of love, happiness and even sorrow. As we said our vows, so long ago, we never dreamed how full our life together would be, and now Willie is at the biggest reunion ever!

– Lois Schmidt

