One Scholar’s Dream Opens Doors for Others

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William “Bill” Simonetti always wanted to be a teacher. His caring smile and sharp sports jacket gave him the air of someone who knew what he wanted: to make the world a better place through education. While pursuing his bachelor’s degree in education at Northeastern University, he worked as a counselor, tutor, and classroom instructor for children with learning disabilities—and in his free time, among other hobbies, sang and played the conga in a five-piece band.

In 1973, Bill was headed home from band practice when he was hurt in a terrible car accident. Bill’s injuries left him unable to function or communicate in the ways he had before, and he would not be the middle school teacher he had dreamed of becoming.

While his life would never be the same, Bill was determined to finish his degree at Northeastern. With the help of his family and friends, Bill persevered and
graduated with his class in 1975.

Although Bill’s teaching ambitions were cut short, his strength and positivity persisted. “Bill’s faith, determination, and optimism pulled him through a very challenging life,” says his aunt Mary R. Tornabene. “He never once complained about his circumstances.”

To honor Bill’s passion for teaching, Mary and his brother James Simonetti established the William P. Simonetti Scholarship at the College of Professional Studies to support students pursuing careers in elementary and secondary education.

“Bill’s eyes lit up when I told him about the scholarship his brother and I wanted to create for him.” Mary adds, “He loved the idea.”

Bill passed away on August 20, 2018, and through the Simonetti Scholarship, made possible by a gift from his brother, Bill’s legacy will touch the lives of Northeastern students for generations to come.

“Our family is grateful to those who have already contributed to the scholarship in Bill’s memory,” says Mary. “We hope that other Northeastern community members will recognize the importance of such a fund when planning their gifts to the university.”
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