



Neil R. Callahan

June 16, 2022

Neil Robert Callahan of Waldwick, New Jersey, formerly of Malden, Massachusetts, and Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, died peacefully at home on June 16, 2022, surrounded by his loving family. He was 86.

Well-known and loved for his quick wit, funny stories, and lighthearted jokes, his buoyant spirit, bright, ice-blue eyes, and brilliant smile lit up every room. Neil knew how to make you feel like a million bucks, like you were important, like everything, no matter what, was going to be all right.

A graduate of Malden High School, Neil earned a bachelor of arts in management from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and studied postgraduate engineering at Northeastern University in Boston. He graduated from the Massachusetts Military Academy, trained at Fort Dix, and served as second lieutenant in the Massachusetts National Guard.

Neil adored his family and was fiercely dedicated to public service and social justice, without regard to personal gain.

An organizer of the original management union at the MBTA (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority), Neil was elected president of Local 453 of the OPEIU (Office and Professional Employees International Union), one of the larger unions of the AFL-CIO. He served as president for six years.

A proud member of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, the oldest chartered military organization in the western hemisphere, Neil was elected First Sergeant of Infantry and was a senior life member.

Because he knew the streets, train tracks, and neighborhoods of Boston like the back of his hand, Neil knew exactly where all the best ice cream shops were. The one on Main Street in Charlestown, just a few minutes' walk from his office across from the Schrafft's factory, was one of his favorites – because it made great banana splits and also had banana slush. And every Brigham's, especially the one in Harvard Square, with the ice-cold, silver, tulip cups and long, thin, silver spoons.

Neil strove all his life to improve people's lives and livelihoods. He wanted to create more opportunities for more people and their families to achieve economic success and stability to soar and thrive and reach their dreams.

"I always had my eye on that," he said recently.

He was elected to the Malden City Council and served the citizens of ward 5 for three terms. He was a member of the Malden Redevelopment Authority and director of the Malden Department of Public Works. It was during Neil's tenure that Malden built a new high school, new city hall, and revitalized downtown.

"We wanted Malden to be the 'All-American City,'" he said.

So, he knew all the little big things – the nitty-gritty of public service – like fixing chains on swings at playgrounds, planting trees, fixing uneven sidewalks, and plowing snow off streets to make public spaces clean, safe, and beautiful for everyone.

And he knew all the big big things – the heart and soul of public service – like writing, advocating for, and passing new laws and public policies, balancing complex budgets, building state-of-the-art infrastructure, and boosting local businesses.

Neil also was a member of the Malden Kiwanis Club and the Wolfeboro Lions Club.

The son of a dad who had played with Babe Ruth and was recruited to play in the majors, Neil was an accomplished baseball player, valued teammate, and avid fan. He played catcher at Malden High and at UMASS, and continued to play competitively after college.

A loyal, lifelong Red Sox fan, he delighted and grew closer in love and joy with his six New York City-born grandchildren by watching, following, and knowing everything about the Yankees with them.

Named Papa by his first grandchild, he cherished listening to and supporting his children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. With his uplifting attitude, words of encouragement, and humor, he shared invaluable life lessons and created fond memories with all of the young people in his life.

Neil didn't wear his heart on his sleeve. But he often would take you by surprise.

He felt deeply, loved deeply, and lived deeply. You could talk to Neil about anything, and he'd talk with you with knowledge, insight, and understanding like it was top of mind for him.

He shared and relished simple joys, like the shadow of a tree on the grass, suddenly appearing and strikingly beautiful birds, and the amusing antics of wild, backyard animals.

While raising his young family, he especially treasured his summers at his cottage in Milton, New Hampshire, where he could enjoy growing a mustache, smoking a cigar to keep the mosquitos away, and wearing his red, white, and blue striped pants and white patent-leather shoes for the Fourth of July.

Born in Lynn, Massachusetts, on December 22, 1935, Neil was the son of the late Daniel Edward and Marion Nihan Callahan. He married Margaret Rose Kelley Callahan on July 23, 1966, at Our Lady of Presentation Catholic Church in Boston, where they both took everyone's breath away looking like movie stars.

Neil is survived by many family members, each one of whom he loved with all his heart.

He's survived by Margaret, his devoted wife of 55 years, and their children Joanne Callahan and her husband Kennedy Gorgey and their children Leila and Daniel of Ridgewood, New Jersey; Neil Callahan and his wife Maria Brown Callahan and their children Catherine, Grace, Olivia and Christina of Tenafly, New Jersey; and Maura Callahan and her partner Erica Desfosses of Amesbury, Massachusetts.

Neil is survived by his sister Marion Callahan Harney and her husband John J. Harney of Newport Beach, California, and their sons Kevin of Highlands Ranch, Colorado, Paul of Sacramento, California, Daniel of Carlsbad, California, and Steve of Las Vegas, Nevada; and his sister-in-law Clare Bennett Callahan and her daughter Nancy, both of Marblehead, Massachusetts.

He is also survived by his sisters- and brothers-in-law in Massachusetts: Virginia Kelley Cronin of Swampscott, Agnes Kelley Manning of Amesbury, Dr. Maryellen Kelley of Eastham, Patricia Kelley Conway of Osterville, Kathryn Kelley Brasco of Weston, Thomas M. Kelley of Plymouth, Dr. Joseph Conway of Osterville, and Michael Brasco of Weston; his brother-in-law Albert T. Kelley of Lexington, Kentucky; and many extended family, including Catherine Brown Arroyo, her husband Ariel Arroyo, and their children Alexandra and Jouaquin of Brooklyn.

He was predeceased by his brother Daniel Edward Callahan, Jr., and his nephew Daniel Edward Callahan III, both of whom he loved dearly.

Visitation at the Barrett Leber Funeral Home, 148 Dean Drive, Tenafly, New Jersey, on Friday, June 24, from 4 to 8 p.m. Funeral Mass, Saturday, June 25, at 11 a.m. at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church, 10 County Road, Tenafly, New Jersey. Cremation private. Memorial service and graveside burial will take place in September at Saint Mary's Catholic Cemetery in Lynn, Massachusetts.

All are welcome to share a memory of Neil or send condolences to his family below.

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN **24.** 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Barrett Leber Funeral Home
148 Dean Dr
Tenafly, NJ 07670
(201) 568-8043
<https://www.barrettleberfuneralhome.com/>

Funeral Mass

JUN **25.** 11:00 AM (ET)

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Roman Catholic Church
10 County Rd
Tenafly, NJ 07670-2105
(201) 568-0545

Tribute Wall



“ We remember most fondly Neil (and Peg) through numerous Newcomer activities. Best of all - his wonderful smile and the way his face would light up. Susan Poirier / Bob Zeliff Wolfeboro

Susan Poirier - July 03, 2022 at 02:35 PM



“ Days of Sunshine Bouquet was purchased for the family of Neil R. Callahan.



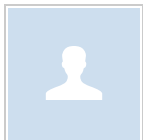
June 23, 2022 at 10:07 PM



“ Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of Neil R. Callahan.



June 23, 2022 at 08:47 PM



“ Divine Light was purchased for the family of Neil R. Callahan.



June 23, 2022 at 07:44 PM



“ *Lavender Reflections Spray* was purchased for the family of Neil R. Callahan.



June 22, 2022 at 06:53 PM



“ *Dreams From the Heart Bouquet* was purchased for the family of Neil R. Callahan.



June 22, 2022 at 04:45 PM



“ *Peace Eternal Wreath* was purchased for the family of Neil R. Callahan.



June 22, 2022 at 12:19 PM



“ *Country Basket Blooms* was purchased for the family of Neil R. Callahan.



June 22, 2022 at 09:50 AM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Neil R. Callahan.*



June 21, 2022 at 09:32 AM



“ *Care and Compassion Spray was purchased for the family of Neil R. Callahan.*



June 20, 2022 at 09:54 PM

“ My dad had a gorgeous singing voice. He sang throughout high school and with many of his friends in the high school musical senior year. At 29 Baincroft Road in Malden, a house my dad expanded to more than double in size for his growing family with his own engineering planning, enormous physical strength, and bare hands, my dad would sing happily alone in the kitchen – standing at the sink washing and drying the dishes, or cleaning our little parakeet’s cage, while our cat Nutty stealthily readied for any tiny chance to pounce. Barbara Streisand, Frank Sinatra, Johnny Mathis, Billy Eckstine, Neil Diamond, Kenny Rodgers.

My dad took all the toughest breast cancer treatments they have. All of his health struggles stemmed from the side effects of his treatments, not the disease. He carried on with breathtaking fortitude, grace, and elegance. I told him recently about a poet I had found as part of my own healing from some of the same treatments he had. Had he heard of her, I asked him, thinking, no he wouldn’t, not poetry, not him. But right away he said yes, like oh yeah, I know her. Yet another take-you-by-surprise moment. Here’s one I thought he would appreciate.

The Summer Day
by Mary Oliver

*Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean –
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down –
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don’t know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down*

*into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?*

Joanne Callahan - June 20, 2022 at 11:26 AM



“ *Treasured Lilies Spray was purchased for the family of Neil R. Callahan.*



June 19, 2022 at 06:38 PM



“ *Heavenly Sentiments Spray was purchased for the family of Neil R. Callahan.*



June 19, 2022 at 02:57 PM



“ *Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the family of Neil R. Callahan.*



June 19, 2022 at 11:44 AM

JF

“ Joe and Tricia Conway and family purchased the *Dreams From the Heart Bouquet* for the family of Neil R. Callahan.



Joe and Tricia Conway and family - June 18, 2022 at 01:17 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket* was purchased for the family of Neil R. Callahan.



June 17, 2022 at 11:13 PM



“ *Fairest of All* was purchased for the family of Neil R. Callahan.



June 17, 2022 at 04:33 PM