



ObituaryData.com Record

1 message

Info@obituarydata.com <Info@obituarydata.com>
To: ckimball@williams.edu

Thu, Apr 12, 2018 at 8:06 AM

Jonathan O'Brien '60¹

Obituary / Death Notice a service of ObituaryData.com

Name	Residence	
Jonathan B. O'Brien	Providence, RI	
Age	Approx. Date of Birth	Approx. Date of Death:
79	4/21/1938	3/22/2018

Notice

Jonathan B. O'Brien, 79, of Providence, Rhode Island and Westport MA, loving husband of Joan Dominick O'Brien, to whom he was married for 59 years, died peacefully on March 22, 2018 after a short illness. Jon was the former Head of St. Andrew's School in Middletown, Delaware. His warmth and spirit, integrity and compassion, filled the hearts of his family and friends, and touched the lives of numerous colleagues and generations of students. Born in New York City, on April 21, 1938, to Donal C. O'Brien and Constance B. O'Brien, Jon and his three brothers grew up in Manhattan and New Canaan, Connecticut, spending summers in West Hampton and Nantucket. He attended The Buckley School in Manhattan, and New Canaan Country School and The Hotchkiss School in Connecticut. He graduated from Williams College in 1960 and from Columbia University Law School in 1963. After finishing law school, Jon joined the firm of Robinson Cole in Hartford, Connecticut. At that time, he and Joan, settled with their three daughters in Canton Center, Connecticut where lifelong friendships were formed. 1966, Jon left the law and accepted a teaching position at Westminster School in nearby Simsbury, Connecticut. He immersed himself in every aspect of school life and was a devoted mentor to his students. As an English teacher, coach, and, eventually, Assistant Headmaster, he had found his life's vocation. In 1977 Jon was appointed Head of St. Andrew's School. At the news of Jon's death, Tad Roach, current Head of School and Jon's successor, wrote, "St. Andrew's changed forever when a brilliant young Headmaster arrived in 1977 with an enthusiasm, zest, and vision that would lift the School to new recognition, respect, and acclaim nationally and internationally. For 20 years, from 1977-1997, Jon and Joan O'Brien shared their passion, humanity, enthusiasm, and creativity with their community. St. Andrew's trustees, alumni, parents, faculty, staff, and students responded accordingly. The O'Brien vision involved linking the School's tradition and promise of academic excellence with a spirit of human kindness, respect, teamwork, and collaboration." "Jon O'Brien demonstrated what true leadership looked like: it consisted of long hours, day and night, unfailing enthusiasm and passion for the work of the School, the courage to make difficult decisions, and the vision to understand just how St. Andrew's might grow and thrive." In 1997, Jon retired to Westport, Massachusetts, where he took up oil painting with a vengeance. Jon was a founding board member of Our Sisters' School in New Bedford, Massachusetts, served on the Board of Trustees at Friends Academy in Dartmouth, Massachusetts and was a trustee at the United Congregational Church, in Little Compton, Rhode Island. More than anything, Jon was a devoted husband and father. In 1950, after moving to Connecticut from New York, he met his future wife, Joan Dominick, when he entered 7th grade at New Canaan Country School. Jon and Joan married on June 12th, 1958 and would have celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary this spring. Jon and Joan's partnership was exceptional and unique. Their marriage thrived because of their shared values and the mutual respect they had for one another. Jon once remarked that, "There was no way on earth that [he] could have survived at [St. Andrew's] or any school without Joan... This has been a team effort; we consult on everything that comes before us. I use her as a sounding board. She is very much my confidant and I listen to her very carefully." Jon adored his three daughters. He was as present in their lives as a parent could be whether in person, or via multi-paged, hand-written letters on his ubiquitous yellow legal pads, the latter of which were not unknown to some of his students. He was also a loving and influential presence in the lives of his grandchildren with whom he shared his practical wisdom, sense of humor, love of the natural world, and infinite patience and compassion. In addition to his wife, Joan, Jon is survived by daughters, Jennifer Clare O'Brien of San Francisco, Margrett (Megan) Shaw O'Brien of New Bedford, MA, and Elizabeth (Lou) O'Brien Berl of Middletown DE, son-in-law, Christopher Norrie Berl, grandchildren, Jonathan and Olivia Decker, Charlotte, Wilder and Allaire Berl, and brother, Stephen B. O'Brien. He was predeceased by two brothers, Donal C. O'Brien, Jr. and C. David O'Brien. A Celebration of Life will be held Sunday, April 22, 2018 at 2:00pm, Central Congregational Church, 296 Angell Street Providence, Rhode Island. Memorial contributions may be made to Our Sisters' School, New Bedford, MA, Friends Academy Annual Fund, Dartmouth, MA, Laurelmead Educational Enrichment Foundation (LEEF), St. Andrew's School, Middletown, DE, and Central Congregational Church, Providence, RI. A reception will follow the service in the Chapel Hall located at the church.

