



Dr. Joseph W. Brownell

May 25, 1927 - December 8, 2019

Dr. Joseph W. Brownell, retired professor of Geography and Cartography at SUNY Cortland, passed away on Sunday, Dec. 8, 2019 at Guthrie-Cortland Nursing and Rehabilitation Center at the age of 92. He had been recovering from hip surgery following a recent fall.

He was born to Roland and Catherine (Griffin) Brownell on May 25, 1927 in New Bremen, N.Y. Dr. Brownell married Kathryn Emerson in 1955 and together they raised three children.

Dr. Brownell was a graduate of Syracuse University and was a member of the SUNY Cortland faculty for more than half a century. He was a professor of geography from 1956 until his retirement in 2001, but continued teaching part-time for many more years. He served as chair of the geography department for several years. At the time of his retirement, he was the most senior faculty member in the college's history.

Dr. Brownell also taught at the University of Alberta and the University of Manitoba while on sabbaticals in the 1950s and 1960s.

An accomplished author, Dr. Brownell wrote "Adirondack Tragedy: The Gillette Murder Case of 1906" (with Patricia W. Enos), and a followup book, "Cortland to the Adirondacks: A Fateful Journey in 1906." He was considered a leading authority on the subject and lectured extensively. He also wrote a novel, "The Albany Road: A Boy, the Adirondacks and War," and a short story, "Ticker, The Timid Star." He also published several geography reports and written family histories.

As the son of a CCC Camp Superintendent, Dr. Brownell grew up living in a different community every year, moving as far south as Virginia. He never attended the same school for consecutive years until he was in high school.

Dr. Brownell was a historian and loved researching. He had an amazing capacity for detail and he once traveled to Detroit to take a picture of a headstone in a cemetery.

Dr. Brownell traveled extensively through Europe, the United States and Canada. Every summer he packed his family of 5 into a VW Beetle and travel to someplace new, usually a location of historical or educational significance.

Dr. Brownell was a HAM radio operator (W2BSI), photographer (the downstairs bathroom was a dark room for several years), stamp collector, coin collector and genealogist. For several years he drew political cartoons for the Cortland Standard under the pseudonym Cecil Harford. Dr. Brownell was also an actor who loved performing with campus or community theater groups.

Dr. Brownell served in the U.S. Navy during both World War II and the Korean War. He was a humble man who often deflected gratitude expressed by others for his service because he did not serve in combat.

He was the epitome of kindness and patience. He loved teaching and stayed in contact with many of his former students. He was proud of his Irish heritage and loved listening to Irish folk songs and watching Irish dance and music performances.

Dr. Brownell's survivors include a son, Greg Brownell of Queensbury, N.Y., daughters Linda Brownell (Charles) Glover of Marathon, N.Y., daughter Sharon Brownell (Jon) Redfield of Fredonia, N.Y., grandsons Sean, Jacob and Kevin Redfield of Fredonia, N.Y., step-grandchildren Brooke Glover of Marathon, N.Y., and Kaitlyn Glover of Cortland, N.Y., and step-great grandchild Trevor Howe of Cortland, N.Y. He was predeceased by his wife, Kathryn Emerson Brownell, and a brother, John R. Brownell.

Funeral services will be conducted on Saturday, Dec. 21, 2019 at 10 a.m. at Grace Holy Spirit Church, Court St., Cortland, N.Y., Rev. Peter Williams officiating, with a luncheon afterward. The family will be present to receive friends on Friday Dec. 20, 2019 from 4-6 p.m. from the Chapel of Riccardi Funeral Home 69 N. Main St. Cortland, N.Y. 13045.

Those wishing to honor Joseph's life are encouraged to donate to the Cortland County Historical Society. Alternatively, please consider performing acts of kindness and giving back to your community in ways such as donating blood and/or plasma, exercising your right and responsibility to vote, mentoring children, volunteering, shopping at independent small businesses, adopting from shelters or simply buying a cup of coffee for the next person in line.

The family would like to thank Walden Place for their kindness and support and for

promoting the dignity and independence of all the people who have made their home there; Grace Holy Spirit Church for being an extension of his family; the Cortland County Historical Society for their enthusiastic support of Dad's projects.

Condolences may also be sent to the family by visiting www.riccardifuneralhome.com

Tribute Wall

AB

“ *I just watched Dr Brownell's youtube talk on the Grace Brown Murder and just wanted to say what an amazing speaker, kind and deliciously witty gentleman.*

*Rest in Peace after a well lived beautiful life.
Abigail Recktenwald*

Abigail - May 16, 2021 at 06:20 PM

DM

“ *Peace be with you and your family. Rest In Peace Dr. Brownell.*



Doug and Nancy McCool - December 21, 2019 at 10:13 AM

SG

“ *Joe Brownell*

Joe Brownell has been a part of my life since I was a small child. Mom and Dad would bring us to the Griffin homestead each year to celebrate Uncle Will's birthday. These family gatherings gave me a sense of the closeness and rich history of our extended family. As I grew up, I had the opportunity to walk and talk with Joe around the family homestead on the hill. He enriched my life and I will miss him.

Stephen Griffin - December 18, 2019 at 07:04 AM

LR

“ *Greg, Linda and Sharon,
I'm so sorry to hear of your dad's passing. He was such a wonderful man. I spent so much of my childhood at the Brownells. I loved walking into the house and seeing all of his radio equipment. I lived right across the street so sometimes at night Sharon and I would talk to each other from our bedroom windows, one night Sharon said what time is it and all the sudden we heard Joe say in a loud voice IT'S TIME FOR BED. I remember that night so clearly. Thinking of all of you. Love
Laura Rood (Moffitt)*

Laura Rood - December 18, 2019 at 05:39 AM

SR

“ *Scott And Rosie lit a candle in memory of Dr. Joseph W. Brownell*



Scott and Rosie - December 17, 2019 at 03:45 PM

GH

“ *Dr. Brownell was a kind and caring man. I knew him when I worked in Dryden NY.*

Gloria Havington - December 14, 2019 at 11:13 AM

LG

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Linda Glover - December 13, 2019 at 06:52 PM

LG

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Linda Glover - December 13, 2019 at 05:57 PM

KM

“ *It was a pleasure to get to know Dr. Brownell in class in 1986. The class was Travel & Tourism and it was so much fun. Dr. Brownell was exceptional. He was the epitome of a scholar and a gentleman. Indeed he was one of my favorite professors largely due to his genuine warmth and humility. And his wife Kathryn was delightful as well! (Perhaps I'm remembering incorrectly, but think I was encouraged to call her Kay.) Several of us were invited to their home at Christmas and for years after Dr. and Mrs. Brownell and my family exchanged Christmas cards. All from one class. My heartfelt condolences to the family and his close friends. Although this is a sad time, you have been blessed with many wonderful years with a lovely man and his lovely wife. May the Lord give you comfort, peace and strength.*

Karin Gudbranson McCadam - December 12, 2019 at 05:52 AM

LG

Thank you!

Linda Glover - December 13, 2019 at 04:13 AM

BK

“ *Dr. Brownell was the dearest human being - full of passion, interest, and adventure. In a huge lecture hall full of students, he held interest. His book on the Gillette case clearly was a legacy - and I am now regretting not getting a signed copy as a memory to pass on to my daughter. I will miss you Dr. Brownell - your steady presence and faithful Christmas note. It was my blessing to know you. I am glad I sat in the first row!*

My condolences to you all - Greg, Linda & Sharon. Bonnie Kurtz, class of '83

Bonnie Kurtz - December 11, 2019 at 07:49 PM

LG

Thank you

Linda Glover - December 13, 2019 at 04:13 AM



“ *Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Dr. Joseph W. Brownell.*



December 11, 2019 at 04:03 PM

JC

“ *“May the angels / come to greet you. / May they lead you to paradise.”*



These priceless images merely scratch the surface of the many, many facets of a cherished friend to the community-- and by that I mean the community of the world at large, because it takes a village. And Joe made the world his village. Joe had many, many faces and facets, but I will remember him best (a) making plans for his next imprint, next edition, next publication, next collaboration, next research idea and (b) indelibly portraying geologist Professor Willard in the most recent production of Thornton Wilder's OUR TOWN in Karen's Room at the Center for the Arts of Homer.

I'd like to think that Joe would urge you to go back and re-read that script or to make plans to see the next production somewhere, anywhere in the world.

He dropped many pebbles in a quiet pool and the ripples will go on and on and on and on and on and on and

Sending much love and gratitude for a life well lived,

*Jack Carr
son of John Carr, d. 12/9/73*

Jack Carr - December 11, 2019 at 08:47 AM

LG

Thank you Jack, for your lovely words

Linda Brownell Glover - December 11, 2019 at 06:02 PM

MB

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Marjorie M Buchyn - December 11, 2019 at 08:35 AM

LG

I love this photo

Linda Brownell Glover - December 11, 2019 at 06:03 PM

LG

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Linda Brownell Glover - December 11, 2019 at 07:50 AM



Oh my heart :)

Amie Underwood - December 11, 2019 at 09:12 AM

LG

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Linda Brownell Glover - December 11, 2019 at 07:47 AM

MB

“ Dear Greg, Linda & Sharon, My thoughts & prayers are with you all in this difficult time, but we must all admit he had a great and full life. I am now the only living descendant of the William Griffin family. Memories of my cousin are many...mostly in childhood as he was 10 years older. We grew up "on the hill", Griffin homestead & spent many hours playing together. As he had no sisters, he was my "big brother". As a teenager, I remember spending time with him in his little radio room on W2BSI. I was totally amazed that we could talk to anyone in the world!. Remember the good times !!! It will ease the pain.

Marjorie M Buchyn - December 11, 2019 at 07:14 AM

MB

Correction of message from Marjorie Buchyn.....last surviving of our generation...don't mean to ignore all those in future generations !

Marjorie M Buchyn - December 11, 2019 at 09:59 AM

LG

Ha! Not a problem!

Linda Brownell Glover - December 11, 2019 at 06:04 PM

LG

“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



Linda Brownell Glover - December 11, 2019 at 06:55 AM



This is AMAZING!!

Amie Underwood - December 11, 2019 at 09:13 AM

LG

“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



Linda Brownell Glover - December 11, 2019 at 06:54 AM

LG

“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



Linda Brownell Glover - December 11, 2019 at 06:54 AM

LG

“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



Linda Brownell Glover - December 11, 2019 at 06:51 AM

AP

“ *My sympathy to the family of a well liked professor. He was an asset to SUNY Cortland. Former secretary to the Geography Dept. Angie Partigianoni*

angie partigianoni - December 11, 2019 at 12:47 AM

LG

Thank you

Linda Brownell Glover - December 11, 2019 at 06:41 AM

BY

“ *My condolences to the Brownell family. Dr. Brownell was a scholar, gentleman and a great storyteller. His Cultural Geography class in the spring semester of my freshman year at Cortland inspired me to become a geography major. I am also grateful to him for "going easy" on me when I took his Cartography class. He was one of the reasons why Cortland was a great school to attend in the late 1960s. He will be missed.*

Bob Yehl, Class of 1970

Bob Yehl - December 10, 2019 at 07:48 PM

LG

Thank you

Linda Brownell Glover - December 11, 2019 at 06:41 AM

BC

“ *Dr. Brownell and later Joe was one of my very first professors at Cortland probably in 1958 and he remained my favorite. After I completed my degree I joined the professional staff at Cortland and Joe became a good friend and has remained one through the years. I will miss him greatly and send my deepest sympathies to his family and friends. Breta S. Sisson, Class of 1968*

Breta C.Sisson - December 10, 2019 at 07:16 PM

LG

Thank you

Linda Brownell Glover - December 11, 2019 at 06:42 AM

JO

“ *RIP old neighbor.
Jim Ochsner
Fort Myers FL*

JAMES OCHSNER - December 10, 2019 at 06:48 PM

TW

“ *I'm so sorry to hear of Mr Brownell's passing. I will always hold fond memories of gearing his childhood stories. He was like a dad to me in recent years & he will be dearly missed.*

Terri Woodford - December 10, 2019 at 06:21 PM

LG

Thank you. He really enjoyed your visits!

Linda Brownell Glover - December 11, 2019 at 06:42 AM



“ *Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Dr. Joseph W. Brownell.*



December 10, 2019 at 05:57 PM