



George Beschen

June 14, 2016

George M. Beschen, 73

Philadelphia school teacher for 35 years

For 22 of his 35 years of teaching, George Beschen taught at John Welsh Elementary School in North Philadelphia. It wasn't uncommon for his students to come to school hungry. He'd store apples and crackers in his desk. "You can't fill a mind on an empty stomach," was one of his mantras.

In 1989, he moved to Fox Chase Elementary in Northeast Philadelphia. Students there had more advantages, but they got the same kind-hearted Mr. Beschen, full lessons in and out of the classroom.

Beschen's qualities as a teacher once moved the Welsh school principal to write, "If the Philadelphia school system had 15,000 George Beschens, it would be the premier system in the country."

On Tuesday, June 14, Beschen, 73, died at Wesley Enhanced Living in Northeast Philadelphia. He had been diagnosed with a rare form of Alzheimer's disease in 2004. He was surrounded by his children and his wife Bettyanne.

In addition to his teaching, Beschen was a CYO softball coach for his parish (Presentation BVM) 1981-1991, winning several championships and ending his career with a record of 100-15, a tenor with the Abington Choral Club for nearly 30 years, and he was a founding member of the Burholme town watch.

Born in Philadelphia on May 17, 1943, Beschen grew up in North Wildwood and graduated from Wildwood Catholic High School in 1961. He earned his Bachelor's degree in history education at La Salle University in 1966 and a Master's in education from Temple University in 1970.

The John Welsh School honored him with its Teacher of the Year Award in 1986. The same year, he won an award from National Geographic for “excellence in teaching geography.”

A gifted writer, Beschen always made writing a part of his lesson plan. "During my early years of teaching, I came to understand that it is not so much what a teacher says that is most important, it is what a child hears," he wrote in an essay after being nominated for another teaching award in 1997. "Since writing is an exercise that takes place within a child's mind, it offers me a clearer idea of his/her understanding of subject matter."

His students were also well aware of his life-long devotion to physical activity. While at Fox Chase, he often biked to work. At recess, he played basketball with students. He spent summers with his family in Lavallette, NJ. Beachgoers there grew accustomed to seeing him taking his bright yellow kayak out into the ocean, or doing backflips into the surf well into his 50s. He began many summer mornings with two hours of doubles tennis. He took up running at 46; his summer wardrobe thereafter consisting of T-shirts from various 5-mile and 10K runs.

Although he always considered himself as having lived a charmed life, Beschen did experience loss. His only brother, James Beschen, 21, a captain in the U.S. Marine Corps, died in Vietnam in July 1966. (Next month, North Wildwood will host the 47th annual Beschen-Callahan Memorial Lifeguard Races.) And he endured his long illness with abundant grace.

“We had the best experience with this disease because of his kind and noble nature,” said his daughter Mary. “He never lost his sense of wonder -- enjoying what a child did, savoring a piece of music, enjoying a glorious sunset -- and he gave it to us. He was always willing to share it.”

Beschen is survived by his wife, Bettyanne Ludwig Beschen; sisters Betty Markee and Sue McWilliams; children Mary, Elizabeth, George, and Kate; grandchildren Eden, Jude, and Evangeline; sons-in-law Dino and Peter; and many nieces and nephews.

Events

JUN **Viewing** 09:00AM - 11:00AM

17

Presentation BVM Church

100 Old Soldiers Rd., Cheltenham, PA, US, 19012

JUN **Funeral Mass** 11:00AM - 12:00PM

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Presentation BVM Church

100 Old Soldiers Rd., Cheltenham, PA, US, 19012

JUN **Funeral Luncheon** 12:30PM - 02:30PM

17

Melrose Country Club

7600 Tookany Creek Pkwy., Cheltenham, PA, US, 19012

Comments



“ I did not know George M. Beschen. However, I went to John Welsh in the early 80s. It was an excellent school. Hence I know George M. Beschen was an excellent teacher. Rest in peace! Thank you for loving your student's soul and not just their minds.

Crusito Cordero - May 05, 2017 at 09:41 PM



“ Ahhh, sooooo many memories of George. I'll pick 2. He was my boss during the summer months at Ye Olde School Inn. Off season we missed him there. Every summer after the Inn was gone I would see him on the beach. Me on Vance Ave him, the mayor walking around the beach saying hello n taking pics of everyone. It was not uncommon for him to scoop up one or two of my children and swim with them. Giving me a much needed unsolicited break to just chill in my chair for a few minutes. That was George. Every year a Christmas card would arrive with a hand written note and that summer's pic that he had snapped. You and your family are bright spots in my mind! My privilege to have known you George.

Diane Dougherty Kerrigan - June 19, 2016 at 09:27 AM



“ Strength & Solace Spray was purchased for the family of George Beschen.



June 17, 2016 at 09:43 AM



“ I have many fond memories of George and summer at the beach. Always so pleasant and fun. I always enjoyed him and his energy he was so much fun. Kind beyond measure I am sure he will be missed. May your wonderful family find peace and comfort at this time.

serena nino - June 16, 2016 at 09:15 PM



“ Always looked forward to every summer and playing tennis with George, Ginny, Judy, and Janet. I guess you had to have a "g" sound in your name in order to get into our group. After tennis, George could be found walking the beach...I guess he didn't get enough exercise playing tennis; or you could find him kayaking on the ocean...from Ortleigh to Lavallette. He was a dynamo. Perhaps, he was the prototype for the Energizer Bunny. Rest in peace my friend.

Joe Rudloff - June 16, 2016 at 06:32 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of George Beschen.



June 16, 2016 at 01:22 PM



“ George and I taught 4th grade across the hall at John Welsh School for 30 years. He was always on task, a very responsible teacher. The children liked to hang out with him at all times and his love for them was very evident. He wasn't a "shouting" teacher but had complete control of the kids. As anyone who knew him could testify, George was spiritually a very mature man who maintained a sense of perspective and balance. I never in all of those years ever saw him "lose it." He knew kids, was flexible when he needed to be and forceful when the occasion called for it. Reading his obituary is reading about an inspiring person. And I'm sure that our Loving God is warmly embracing George.

Claude C Crumpton - June 16, 2016 at 01:22 PM



“ Our love Jimmy, Pam, and family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of George Beschen.



Our love Jimmy, Pam, and family - June 16, 2016 at 11:49 AM



“ Dick, Rosemary and family purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of George Beschen.



Dick, Rosemary and family - June 16, 2016 at 11:31 AM



“ Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of George Beschen.



June 16, 2016 at 11:26 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of George Beschen.



June 15, 2016 at 03:40 PM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



kathryn - June 15, 2016 at 10:35 AM