



SR0961

LRB096 23807 GRL 43192 r

1

SENATE RESOLUTION

2

WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois Senate are saddened to learn of the death of Bruce H. Conley of Elburn, who passed away on September 11, 2010; and

3

4

5

WHEREAS, Bruce Conley was born on April 13, 1950, in Elburn; he was the youngest child of Charles and Winifred McMurray Conley; he spent his early years playing in his neighborhood, "hunting tigers", playing cowboys and Indians, and spending many hours swinging in his grandparents' backyard, where sometimes he could be heard singing "O, My Papa"; his outdoors activities were often limited due to hay fever and allergies, leading him to learn to express himself through music and writing; and

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

WHEREAS, Bruce Conley attended Elburn Grade School and Kaneland High School, where he excelled in music and graduated with the Class of 1968; he began playing cornet in the fifth grade and took private lessons at Dee Palmer's in DeKalb; he played a Bach trumpet in high school and college, at many family "jam sessions" and, until recently, in tribute to many veterans as they were laid to rest; as a teenager, his music took him another direction and he helped create The Uther Days, a rock band later also known as Denver Green; Bruce played lead guitar, with Dave Johnson, Steve Gliddon, and Bob Hamblen

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

1 making up the rest of the band; and

2 WHEREAS, After graduation, Bruce Conley attended North  
3 Central College in Naperville, where he majored in music;  
4 during his senior year in high school, he began training as an  
5 aid at Delnor Hospital in St. Charles; while at Delnor  
6 Hospital, he met Kristine McConnaughay, a junior at St. Charles  
7 High School, and the pair soon fell in love; after his freshman  
8 year at North Central, he transferred to Southern Illinois  
9 University in Carbondale, where he began his studies in  
10 mortuary science; he subsequently studied psychology at  
11 Wisconsin State University and mass communication at Northern  
12 Illinois University before entering the Army Reserve in 1971;  
13 after returning home, he became an on-air announcer at WKKD-FM  
14 in Aurora; and

15 WHEREAS, On October 7, 1972, Bruce and Kris Conley were  
16 united in marriage at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church in St.  
17 Charles; the couple settled into their home on South Main  
18 Street in Elburn; that same year, he decided to return to his  
19 mortuary science studies and began attending Worsham College in  
20 Chicago, where he graduated in 1973, and joined his parents in  
21 the family business; on October 11, 1976, Bruce and Kris were  
22 blessed with the birth of their son, Benjamin Hale; on February  
23 1, 1982, Bruce and Kris were once again blessed with the birth  
24 of their daughter, Sarah Louise; in 1983, Bruce and his family

1 moved to their new home on Main Street; and

2       WHEREAS, Throughout his life, Bruce Conley was passionate  
3 about helping grieving children; in 1975, he penned  
4 "Butterflies, Grandpa & Me", a story and coloring book  
5 illustrated by his sister, Karen, and written to help explain  
6 death, grief, and the funeral to children; thousands of copies  
7 of the book were published and used throughout the years by  
8 funeral homes, churches, and hospice programs, along with his  
9 later books, "Handling the Holidays" and "Plain Paper Poems",  
10 which contained poems written by Bruce and Karen; he also wrote  
11 a number of bereavement pamphlets, several of which were  
12 translated and used in bereavement groups in South Africa; his  
13 publications are still used across the country by those who are  
14 dedicated to helping grieving families; his writing and  
15 speaking on grief also attracted him to a number of self-help  
16 programs that began in the early 1980s across the Fox Valley;  
17 and

18       WHEREAS, Bruce Conley was instrumental in the founding of  
19 Compassionate Friends, Survivors of Suicide, the Widowed  
20 Persons Service, Fox Valley Hospice, and the DeKalb Hospice,  
21 among many other programs; in 1983, he founded Elburn's first  
22 counseling center with Dr. Del Hagin of Aurora College, which  
23 would grow beyond bereavement to become Conley Outreach  
24 Community Services, which was incorporated as a not-for-profit

1 organization in 1995; in the fall of 1985, Bruce took on the  
2 challenge of saving the old Elburn Elementary School as a  
3 community center; with the help of many others in his  
4 community, he succeeded and founded the Elburn and Countryside  
5 Community Center as a not-for-profit organization; Bruce was  
6 involved in State and national associations concerned with  
7 bereavement care throughout much of the 1990s; in 1995, he led  
8 the first conclave between the National Hospice Organization  
9 and the National Funeral Directors Association; in 1998, he  
10 chaired the Association for Death Education and Counseling  
11 national conference held in Chicago; in 2000, his focus  
12 returned home to take over the West Towns Network, a tax  
13 supported program of 708 Inc., which became a service of Conley  
14 Outreach; in 2001, Bruce joined with Dr. Michael Mangis and Dr.  
15 Donald Preussler of Wheaton College to create the Center for  
16 Rural Psychology, which took over the counseling arm of Conley  
17 Outreach to become Heartland Counseling; Bruce's ultimate  
18 vision for combined bereavement and community care found  
19 dimension in his dream of a barn raising on the grounds of the  
20 Ravlin homestead in Kaneville which he acquired in 1997; though  
21 the barn never came to be, many of the programs and services he  
22 envisioned did evolve at the farm through the tireless efforts  
23 of volunteers who created a prayer garden and made use of  
24 existing buildings to host various programs and gatherings; in  
25 2005, Bruce and Kris moved from Elburn to make their home at  
26 the Conley Outreach Farm in Kaneville; he was also a member of

1 the Illinois Funeral Directors Association, the National  
2 Funeral Directors Association, ADEC, Blackberry Lodge #630 AF &  
3 AM in Elburn, and the Community Congregational Church in Elburn  
4 and helped various schools to create crisis teams and programs  
5 to meet the needs of students; and

6 WHEREAS, Bruce Conley wrote countless songs and stories  
7 that left special memories in the hearts of his children,  
8 niece, nephews, and friends; his repertoire included songs of  
9 faith, songs for travel and adventure, and even a song for  
10 "going to get a Christmas tree"; his most recent song, "My  
11 Offering, The Vision", was penned in the last days of his life;  
12 Bruce loved children and spent many years developing programs  
13 to help and to teach the children of his community and the  
14 world at large; he also wrote songs for his nieces and nephews,  
15 great-nieces and great-nephews, and his grandchildren,  
16 including a Christmas story, "Bethlehem Kids", which included  
17 not only his grandchildren but several other children who held  
18 a special place in his heart; throughout his battle with  
19 cancer, he wrote inspiring journal entries on Caring Bridge  
20 that were read by thousands of people across the country who  
21 were touched by his God given skills, caring, words, vision,  
22 and faith; and

23 WHEREAS, Bruce Conley was preceded in death by one child in  
24 infancy; his parents, Charles and Winifred Conley; his brother,

1 Wayne; his paternal and maternal grandparents; his  
2 father-in-law and mother-in-law, Lloyd and Gladys  
3 McConnaughay; and his uncle, George McCloud; and

4 WHEREAS, Bruce Conley is survived by his devoted and loving  
5 wife, Kris; his son, Ben (C.J.) Conley; his daughter, Sarah  
6 Conley; his beloved grandchildren, Andy, Em, Matt, and Mikey  
7 Conley; his sister, Karen (Les) Howard; his niece, Sheila  
8 (Phillip) Albano and their children, Nick and Katherine; his  
9 nephew, Bill Howard; his sister-in-law, Karen (Bill) Wootton  
10 and their son, Daniel Wootton; his aunts and uncle, Ruth  
11 McCloud and Ralph (Ferne) Conley; his extended family of  
12 cousins and their families; his many friends; and the countless  
13 people who have found comfort and hope in his writings, poems,  
14 and songs; and

15 WHEREAS, Bruce Conley will be fondly remembered by all who  
16 knew and loved him for his selfless and compassionate nature,  
17 his incredible creativity and talent, and his wonderful sense  
18 of humor and kindness to all; therefore, be it

19 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-SIXTH GENERAL  
20 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we mourn, along with  
21 his family and friends, the passing of Bruce H. Conley; and be  
22 it further

1           RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
2 presented to the family of Bruce Conley as an expression of our  
3 sympathy.