



William Ray Schmidt Obituary

December 2, 1944 - October 12, 2006

William Ray Schmidt, Jr. (Billy Ray) died Thursday, October 12, 2006 in Birmingham, AL after a brief illness. Funeral services will be 2:00 Saturday, October 14 at Kimbrell-Stern Funeral Home in Albany, GA. A memorial service will be held in Jackson, MS on Monday, October 16, 2006. Billy Ray, son of William Ray and Alice Heidt Schmidt, was born December 2, 1944 in Albany, GA. He was educated in the Albany school system and graduated from Albany High School in 1962. He received a B.S. degree from the University of Georgia in Education. Billy Ray started his athletic career at an early age with the Albany Swim Team and began diving at the Albany Recreation Department in 1959. In 1962 he joined the University of Georgia swim team. In following years, he won the SEC 3M diving championship three times and the SEC 1M diving championship twice. In 1967 he was awarded the UGA Athletic Department Award for highest academic average. He began his coaching career in 1964 with the Albany Swim team and went on to coach diving at UGA and Athens High School. During his Army years, he coached swimming and diving at Yuma Proving Ground in Arizona. He moved to Atlanta in 1970 where he was the diving coach for Westminster Schools until 1992. While at Westminster, he coached 31 high school All-Americans and 2 U.S. Diving National champions. Besides coaching swimming and diving, he was the defensive coordinator with the varsity football team and became the head coach in 1991. In 1992, Billy Ray moved to Jackson, Mississippi where he was the offensive football team coach, the head coach and then, for a time,

director of athletics at St. Andrew's Episcopal School. Billy Ray's first love was the French language. He taught hundreds of students at Westminster and St. Andrew's and accompanied many on their first visit to Paris, instilling his love and appreciation for the French people and culture. Billy Ray was preceded in death by his parents and a nephew, William Bryan Shackelford. He is survived by his sisters, Patty Schmidt (Rocky) Grace of LaGrange, GA and Peggy Schmidt (Butch) Shackelford of Columbus, 4 nephews, Ken Grace, Matthew Grace of Marietta, Danny Shackelford of Roswell and Jes Shackelford of Columbus. Also surviving are 2 great nephews and one great niece. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. Andrew's Episcopal School, 370 Old Agency Road, Ridgeland, MS 39157 or to Westminster Schools 1424 West Pace's Ferry Road, NW, Atlanta, GA 30327.

Tribute Wall



“ *William Ray Schmidt Obituary*

May 22, 2023 at 10:29 AM



“ *William Ray Schmidt Obituary*

May 22, 2023 at 01:29 AM



“ *William Ray Schmidt Obituary*

May 22, 2023 at 01:29 AM



“ *William Ray Schmidt Obituary*

December 24, 2022 at 02:54 AM

GS

“ I am so sorry for the loss of Billy Ray and that I just found this site on a Google Search. God Bless Billy Ray's family in his loss. I wish the family to know how great of a fun, challenging, and positive influence (and mentor) Billy Ray was on my life during my most formative years (13-18). He and his training and style enabled me to dive and swim on the college level for four years! Also, to successfully coach 1983 - 1988. My great friend, team member, and later teammate, Grant Segal, now owns the Atlanta Diving Association. I did not scroll through them all but I enjoyed seeing Craig Ford and Mike Taylor here also. Their diving and form were great influences on me as well! I truly loved that man, Billy Ray. I wish I had some pictures of how I knew him and remember him from Westminster practices, Kings Springs practices, and summer league championships in the Dekalb Atlanta Swim League! The Branches, Vermack, and Dunwoody Country Club, etc.... God Bless!

Greg Sellars -- Huntley Hills Swim and Tennis Club

Greg Sellars - August 06, 2018 at 07:17 PM

JY

“ Your family is in our thoughts and prayers.

*The York Family
San Antonio, Texas*

Jeff York - August 23, 2007 at 12:00 AM

RD

“ I'm alas writing for Billy Ray. I was stunned and saddened to learn late of his passing. My mom was also dying towards end of a long Lou Gehrig's journey---passed late Feb. BR had almost as great an influence on me as SHE did! I began at Westminster (8th) when he did. He took this "skinny kid", as he called me, and created a decent diver/competitor. He instilled confidence and pride where there'd been a shaky new kid at school. He was a perfectionist coach and a great counselor to this kid who needed it. He taught me hard work and discipline, French, Spanish and many now-for-generations hilarious expressions! We will all miss him dearly and remember him well. Thank you, BR. God bless you and your proud family.

Reid Davidson - May 09, 2007 at 12:00 AM

GB

“ I would like to express my deepest sympathies on the loss of Billy Ray. I came to Westminster as a young teacher and coach in 1986, and Billy Ray was a great mentor and friend. I learned a great deal about teaching and coaching from him, more than I can express. The positive influence that he had on me has stayed with me, and I am sure that it always will. I certainly have a very high regard for Billy Ray. My prayers are with you all.

Most sincerely,
George Berry

George Berry - October 31, 2006 at 12:00 AM

CV

“ *B.R. was my first diving coach when I was seven years old. I looked up to him so much and always looked forward to seeing him at diving meets even when I was in college. He was such a kind and loving man. He taught me how to be tough and really work hard for what I wanted. He was there to tell me that I did a great job as well. I will miss him dearly, but I know that he is in a better place now.*

Cheri Vaniman - October 22, 2006 at 12:00 AM

CS

“ *Billy Ray was the perfect high school diving coach for our daughter, Cheri. He knew of our deep appreciation for all of his efforts, and we remained very good friends over these many years. It is with deepest gratitude that we knew him during his highly successful career at Westminster. Billy Ray will be well remembered by all of us.*

Cliff and Carol Sears - October 22, 2006 at 12:00 AM

MT

“ *I was so sad to hear the recent news about Billy Ray. He was a huge influence on my life as a coach, friend and mentor. His passion for Westminster and Diving ignited a desire in me to attend a school he loved so much and to pursue diving on a collegiate level. I will always be thankful to BR and cherish the great memories of our time together. May God be with you all during this time of loss....My thoughts and prayers are with you. Billy Ray will be deeply missed. Mike Taylor*

Mike Taylor - October 20, 2006 at 12:00 AM

DS

“ I knew Billy Ray from our coaching experiences together at Westminster in Atlanta. I was the defensive line coach when Billy Ray was the defensive coordinator and later head coach. He was loved and respected by both the players and other coaches. He was hard-working, honest and uncompromising in his desire to bring out the best in everyone. He will be truly missed.

Dan Spier - October 18, 2006 at 12:00 AM

CF

“ To the family of Billy Ray, Please accept my deepest sympathies with the passing of Billy Ray. We graduated together in 1962 from Albany High School. I considered him a special classmate and a friend. May GOd bless all of you during this time. Sincerely, Cecil Fowler

cecil fowler - October 18, 2006 at 12:00 AM

LS

“ I dove with Billy Ray at Westminster and during summer diving back in the early 1970s. He was my first real adult friend/mentor outside of my family. He was so great and fun and funny and patient, even though I wasn't one of his star divers. I remember driving to dive meets around Georgia in his maroon (cutlass?) with the white top that he was so proud of. I can still see him by the side of the pool giving me an encouraging word. I am sorry I had lost touch with him and I hope he knew what a special guy and great influence he was on all his students. Libby Simons

Libby Black Simons - October 17, 2006 at 12:00 AM

CR

“ Please accept my condolences upon the passing of Mr. Schmidt. He was my junior varsity football coach at Westminster. I remember him well and think I tried his patience as I really had no business playing football. I suppose he could have cut me, but he let me play and I will always remember him for that kindness.

God Bless,
Cheves Robinson

Cheves Robinson - October 17, 2006 at 12:00 AM

CS

“ Dear Patty and Peggy and Family,

I wish I could have been there to pay my respects to Billy Ray. My prayers and thoughts are with the family. My prayer is Billy Ray is in a better place and at peace.

Christy Skolnick - October 16, 2006 at 12:00 AM

PS

“ Teaching in Westminster's Jr. High, just down the hall from Billy Ray, and, like him, attending Language Department meetings and parties, I had the good fortune to know him as a special colleague. Billy Ray always added zest to any conversation, was invariably gregarious and friendly, and gave himself tirelessly to the students he taught and coached. I trust God will comfort all those he loved with blessed memories and the strong assurance of the resurrection.

Sincerely,
Phyllis Seitz

Phyllis L. Seitz - October 16, 2006 at 12:00 AM

LW

“ It is shocking and sad to hear of the passing of a classmate. Billy Ray and I were never close, but were in various classes together all the way from Mamie Brosnan to Albany High. I had not heard anything about him for many years and am delighted to read the many expressions of his influence on students, friends and co-workers. We realize we have lost not only a classmate, but a truly good and accomplished person. My husband, Robert, remembers Billy Ray from a funny prom incident and joins in sending deepest sympathies. God bless,
Robert and Linda Wells

Linda Edwards Wells - October 16, 2006 at 12:00 AM

JS

“ Billy Ray coached my son, Denton from 6th grade to 12th. He also taught him French. He was a great teacher, coach, and person. We loved him dearly.

Joyce Shamburger - October 15, 2006 at 12:00 AM

PH

“ Billy Ray and I coached, officiated, laughed, and cried together for twenty-two years at Westminster Schools. He was a truly remarkable person as he combined his many talents to help the young people around him. Have you ever heard of a French and Spanish teacher, a football coach, a basketball referee, and a diving coach all combined in the same person? Yet, he stayed true to his roots in Albany. BR lived his dash " - " well (1944 - 2006). My thoughts and prayers are with his family and I know that Billy Ray is at rest.

Pete Higgins - October 15, 2006 at 12:00 AM

JS

“ I just realized that my older son who is 49 started Westminster in the 8th grade and his first day, was Billy Ray's first day there also. He reminded me that he was in Billy Ray's homeroom, and also had him for a French teacher. I knew that my younger son had had him, but I had forgotten that Bucky and BR started the very same day. Wonderful memories. dchffooa

joyce shamburger - October 15, 2006 at 12:00 AM

GS

“ One of my favorite teachers at Westminster and one of the best diving coaches ever. Left out of his list accomplishments was his ability to motivate people...including a 14 yr. old classmate who only went onto to win a Gold Medal in the 1976 Olympics (Jennifer Chandler). A great man - a Westminster original to be sorely missed.

Griff Sims - October 14, 2006 at 12:00 AM

KA

“ Billy Ray was a great teacher, coach, and colleague. I had the pleasure of teaching French along with Billy Ray at Westminster. May he be at peace and may his family know they are all in our prayers.

Kathy Aitken - October 14, 2006 at 12:00 AM

MG

“ Peggy & Patty, my thoughts & prayers are with you. Billy Ray sure taught me all that I know about diving. It looks his legacy will continue. Love, Maartha Glenn

Martha Glenn - October 14, 2006 at 12:00 AM

CF

“ *B.R. and I shared the love of diving along with many other things during our Atlanta Diving Association/Westminster days. In a recent phone conversation I assured him that God has been very gracious to me and my family. I pray that his family may be at peace with his passing on knowing he will be missed. May He rest in the Father's arms of love!* ”

Craig A. Ford - October 14, 2006 at 12:00 AM

MI

“ *Patty and Peggy- I was so sorry to learn of Billy Ray's passing. My memories of him, of course, are what a beautiful diver he was and him coaching me with my own diving when I was very young. My thoughts are with you. Love, Martha* ”

Martha C. Ivey - October 14, 2006 at 12:00 AM

JS

“ *I am greatly saddened to hear of the untimely death of my wonderful colleague in the French Department at Westminster. And this I can say for no other of my fellow French teachers during his years at Westminster...I was completely confident that any student whom B.R. had taught the year before that student came to me would be prepared to the full extent of that student's ability. B.R.'s commitment to his teaching and to his students, as well as his intelligent and creative mind could never be challenged. He was a master teacher, respected and beloved by students and teachers. I will always treasure the memories I have of him and his excellence in education and coaching.* ”

Judy Smith - October 14, 2006 at 12:00 AM

GP

“ I am very sorry to hear of the loss of Billy Ray. I remember all of those 7a.m. practices and the daily drive from Albany to Doerun with the zipp games for diving practice.

Garry Pritchett - October 14, 2006 at 12:00 AM

MC

“ Billy Ray, I know God is holding you in the hollow of His hand. We will miss you.

Merrill Cote - October 13, 2006 at 12:00 AM

PB

“ Patti(Gigi), we are so sorry for your loss. Unfortunately, we can not be there for the service. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Phillip and Beth Benefield - October 13, 2006 at 12:00 AM

HC

“ I have fond memories of Billy Ray and he will remain forever in my heart. Please know you and your family are in my thoughts and prayers. Hazel

Hazel P. Cochran - October 13, 2006 at 12:00 AM

SS

“ I am a friend of Peggy and also graduated with her. I am so sorry to hear about Billy Ray. I read his obituary, and I know that you are so proud of his life. Now, you can celebrate that life and have great memories. I am praying for your family.

Shirley Musgrove Shockley - October 13, 2006 at 12:00 AM

CR

“ Peggy and Patty, We were so very sad to hear about Billy Ray's death! Y'all have been in our thoughts and prayers. Anne's daughter, Beth, is getting married in Daytona this week-end, so I will be out of town. I am so sorry that I cannot be here to see you, but please know you will be in my thoughts. Love, Cathy

Cathy Perry Revell - October 13, 2006 at 12:00 AM

KC

“ Patty, Our thoughts and prayers are with you. Kyle

Kyle W. Crawford - October 13, 2006 at 12:00 AM

CM

“ Billy Ray, Thank you for the senior prom, thank you for Paris, thank you for being a friend. I will miss you. Carol

Carol Rockett Megathlin - October 13, 2006 at 12:00 AM

AG

“ David and I extend our deepest sympathies to you all

Alison Grace - October 13, 2006 at 12:00 AM

DS

“ Goodbye, B.R. You were a good and kindly man

Dell and Cart Schroeder - October 13, 2006 at 12:00 AM

PM

“ I will miss Billy Ray. He was a special person. I can still hear the laughter when he would frequently entertain us. May he rest in peace. God be with you all.

pat mcatee - October 13, 2006 at 12:00 AM

BS

“ *Billy Ray was a good friend and great teacher. I will miss him*

Bill Smith - October 13, 2006 at 12:00 AM

LS

“ *Coach Schmidt was a wonderful teacher and good friend. He had a profound impact on so many of his students, myself included*

Lucien Smith - October 13, 2006 at 12:00 AM

TP

“ *I worked with Billy Ray at Westminster where we spent a lot of time in the "smoking lounge". He was lots of fun and very sharp.*

Toni Parker - October 13, 2006 at 12:00 AM

CL

“ *I taught in the classroom next to Billy Ray for three years at Westminster. I remember his great humor, love for students and his passion for athletics. We worked together on the coaching staff of Westminster's State Championship Football Team. Anyone involved with that team experienced something absolutely magnificent. I will never forget Billy Ray's flatfooted back flips ceremonial of Westminster's football victories. ... I can't help but wonder what Heaven will now be like with Billy Ray and Charlie Brake there together! Clark Lunsford Former Westminster Teacher & Coach*

Clark Lunsford - October 13, 2006 at 12:00 AM