



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Navajo Nation Political Reporter Bill Donovan remembered and honored

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WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — Speaker Seth Damon and the 24th Navajo Nation Council offer their heartfelt condolences to the family and loved ones of renowned journalist Bill Donovan who passed away Saturday night at the age of 76. He covered the Navajo Nation for over 50 years with newspaper publications in Arizona and New Mexico, most notably the Navajo Times and Gallup Independent.

Beginning in 1971, Donovan wrote about tribal government and politics before semi-retiring to reside in Torrance, California, to be closer to his children, Kelly Cunningham and Richard Donovan, and two grandchildren. He continued to report for the Navajo Times since 2018 from California.

“Bill Donovan is remembered as a witty, outgoing, and courageous person who leaves a legacy of news stories that details Navajo political history. He is a beloved grandfather, father, brother, and uncle who dedicated his life to gaining knowledge through reading and being an avid writer. The pages of newspapers and their readers will forever miss

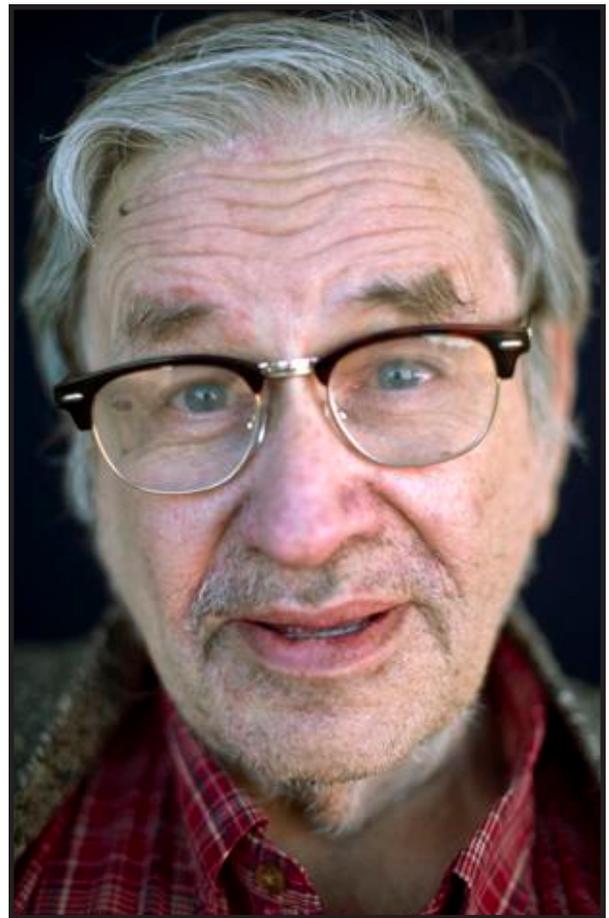


PHOTO: Renowned Journalist Bill Donovan.

Bill. We are saddened by his passing and offer prayers of protection to his family during this time,” said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááhaalí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Red Rock, Rock Springs, Tséyatoh).

Raised in Newport, Kentucky, Donovan attended Georgetown College and covered the courts and police at the Lexington Herald. In September 1970, he relocated to Gallup, N.M. as a sports editor at the Gallup Independent.

Serving the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, former Speaker Lorenzo Bates added, “Bill was straightforward and never put his own slant on a story. He always asked the right questions to get further clarification to ensure his stories were accurate. We remember him for going out of his way to shake hands with tribal leadership while respecting the Navajo Nation government. As Speaker, I would try to buy coffee for him, and his response was - people will talk.”

Described as a true Gallup icon by former mayors and city councilors, Donovan had a folksy style of writing where his news stories were filled with unique details and anecdotes to grab readers' attention. Notable political events he covered included the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute, former Chairman Peter MacDonald, the 1989 Window Rock riot, the shut-down of the Navajo Times, and tribal government reform history.

"For nearly 50 years, Bill was a great servant of the Navajo people. He informed us even when facing criticism from those in power. Behind the many stories he pounded out each week, he was a good, gracious, easy-going guy who loved books and movies. We miss his byline, his conversation in the newsroom, and his tenacious coverage of the news," said Navajo Times Editor Duane Beyal.

In a family statement, Kelly Cunningham added, "Our father Bill was a kindhearted and selfless person who was beloved by many. His humor and quick wit were unparalleled, as he could bring happiness to any situation. I've never seen him upset or angry, only annoyed when my brother and I were grammatically incorrect. He always had a book in his hands, greeted people with sincere respect, and especially loved his work with the Navajo Nation. Our father even talked about a work deadline while resting in the hospital. There will forever remain a missing piece in our hearts for our amazing father and grandfather. We send love to the Navajo people for remembering his impact on history."

An avid reader, Donovan owned a massive collection of books before donating them to local libraries and the Navajo Nation Museum. A memorial service will be hosted this wintertime in Gallup, N.M., by family and close friends. Donations can be sent to the Navajo Nation Library in honor of his name.

"Bill Donovan was a Gallup and Navajo Nation icon. He was a kind, funny and caring person with a strong passion for reading and writing. His reporting was instrumental in educating and informing our community members about their governments, history, and other newsworthy events. He will be dearly missed," said Gallup Independent Reporter Richard Reyes.

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