The Municipal Reporter Memorial Issue

WILLIAM FULGINITI
APRIL 19, 1941 - FEBRUARY 26, 2020
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Bill Fulginiti, 78, beloved Executive Director of the New Mexico Municipal League, left us peacefully surrounded by love on Wednesday, February 26th. Bill was born on April 19, 1941 in Ashland, Pennsylvania, the oldest of 3 children. Bill is survived by his wife Pat of 56 years, brother Jerry, sister Ann, brother in law Jim, nieces, nephews, great nephews and numerous close and dear friends who were like family.

After high school, Bill became a hair dresser, “Mr. William,” a trade he took after his father who was a barber. A few years later, Bill joined the U.S. Air Force and completed 8 years of service as an Airman. Bill and Pat married on August 19th, 1963. Upon completing his military service he began attending the University of Hawaii, where he discovered his interest in the legislative process and received a Bachelor’s Degree in Social Science. Bill also received a Master’s Degree in Public Administration from Pennsylvania State University. His League career began at the Pennsylvania League of Cities in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania as Assistant Executive Director for Legislation where he was a lobbyist and implemented the organization’s legislative program.

In 1977, Santa Fe became Bill and Pat’s home when he was hired by the NM Municipal League Board of Directors as the Executive Director, a position he valued and treasured since the beginning. As Executive Director of the New Mexico Municipal League, Bill was responsible for daily operations and served as Chief Lobbyist. League programs administered by Bill included legislative and executive advocacy on the state and federal level, training of elected and appointed officials, and legal support before the courts. He also actively represented the League before other governmental, trade and business organizations. Bill was the founder of the New Mexico Self Insurers’ Fund, whose primary function is to provide workers’ compensation, general liability, law enforcement, auto, property and health insurance coverage to municipalities. He initiated the first bond pool for municipalities that provided access to national bond markets. Bill was one of the founders of the National League of Cities’ Mutual Insurance Company (NLC MIC) that reinsures municipal league self-insurance pools in 27 states. He served as Chairman of the Board of the NLC MIC from 1986 through 2015, and served to the present as the Chairman Emeritus Board Member. Bill was a former member of the Board of Directors of the National League of Cities Risk Information Sharing Consortium and was a two-time Board Member of the National League of Cities.

Bill was the founder and administrator of the New Mexico Law Enforcement Accreditation Program initiated in 2004. Upon legislative creation of the New Mexico Finance Authority in 1992, he was the first Vice Chair of the Board of Directors, a position he held to the present. Bill was also the Vice Chair of the New Mexico Water Trust Board. He was Co-Chair of the Governor’s Liquor Control Task Force and a member of the State Judicial Compensation Commission. Bill was selected as an “Outstanding Young Man of America,” in 1974, received the New Mexico Distinguished Public Administrator award in 1992, Governor’s Distinguished Public Service award in 2003, Leadership New Mexico Distinguished Alumnus award in 2014, the Franklin Jones award for Tax Policy Achievement in 2018 and the Ricardo Barros Life Time Achievement award in 2017.

Of all of Bill’s accomplishments, he was most proud of taking the New Mexico Municipal League under his dedicated wing and shaping it into a reputable and lasting legacy as a tenacious advocate representing and serving all New Mexico Cities, Towns and Villages.

Bill was an extraordinary, humble, devoted, kind and brilliant man, a “gentle giant”. His calm and effective reach touched many near and far. It goes without saying that Bill was deeply respected, loved and admired. He will be extremely missed by family, League staff, friends, and all who knew him.
February 27, 2020

Dear Pat,

On behalf of the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors, my condolences on your loss.

We are forever grateful to you for sharing Bill with the League, all our elected officials and staff in our municipalities, and with everyone in the State of New Mexico and throughout the United States. Simply put, Bill is irreplaceable as a leader, mentor, colleague, dear friend, and trusted confidant. As a stalwart fighter and strategic negotiator for the needs of our municipalities within the state and at the federal level Bill has left a lasting legacy—the New Mexico Municipal League.

Bill devoted his life to the New Mexico Municipal League as did you. We are grateful to you for the sacrifices you have made over the years in your support of his vision and League work. You are a member of our League family, and forever will be.

The Executive Committee and the Board are here to support you in any way that we can. If there is anything you need or that we can do, please let A.J. know or contact me personally.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Ann Bettison
NMML President
Mayor Pro Tem—Town of Silver City
When I thanked Pat personally for sharing Bill with us for all these years, she said, matter-of-factly and without rancor, “It wasn’t my choice…it was his life.”

As we collectively and individually mourn our mutual unexpected loss of William F. “Bill” Fulginiti let us remember and cherish the legacy he built over forty-two years as the NMML Executive Director. The Executive Committee and Board of Directors commit to work together with our incredible League staff and all of you to build upon the values Bill established and the solid foundation he created by embracing all the promise the future holds.

On behalf of the Executive Committee and Board of Directors, I thank each member of the incredible New Mexico Municipal League team for all they do each and every day to provide our municipalities, staff, and elected officials with the support and services we need during this difficult and unprecedented time not only in our League’s history, but also our nation’s and the world’s history.

To my NMML family, thank you for your heartfelt outreach to and support of our NMML team and to each other.

As always, I thank each of you for your service to your community.
Dear Municipal Officials,

It is with a heavy heart that I write this letter.

The recent and unexpected loss of our Executive Director, William F. Fulginiti, allows us to reflect on his many accomplishments throughout his forty-two years of remarkable service to our Municipalities and to our State.

His standard of care will continue to serve as the foundation of our daily operations and as the guiding light for our future endeavors. Together, our team will move forward and carry his message to all district, congressional, newly-elected meetings, and subsection conferences throughout the years to come.

Bill meant a tremendous amount to the State of New Mexico, and he meant a great deal more to me. He was my strongest mentor, and one of my closest friends through all of my roles in public service. That’s why I consider the continued success of our organization among the most serious responsibilities I’ve had in my life.

As the League brings one era to an end and starts its next, you can share my confidence that we will always keep Bill’s values front and center; rest assured, we will always remember his teachings and will stay on the course he has set.

Bill always referred to all of our member municipal officials as family. We are touched by our family’s outreach efforts, support and expertise during this difficult time.

And together, our family will continue to thrive.

AJ Forte, Interim Executive Director
New Mexico Municipal League
THE BULL RING

Those of us who are Roundhouse junkies know that the bar at the Bull Ring has been for generations where the Santa Fe politicos get together to have drinks and argue, come to a legislative compromise, and/or lick their wounds. I am sure that many readers have lots of memories about that loud and crowded place.

But for me, there were two other special rooms in the Bull Ring. The Banquet Room across from the bar was where many of us would meet for dinner the night before a League meeting. Bill would park himself at the entrance to the room, receiving everyone like the father of the bride at a wedding, saying hello to new mayors and old friends, even spouses uncertain of the boredom factor in the night ahead. All welcomed to the family. Eventually Lisa would be able take a break from managing the place and have a drink or a bite with us. And at that point, the family gathering would be complete.

The New Mexico Municipal League really is a family, and our family dining room is that room in the back. How many friendships were forged over wine, a delicious steak or too many side dishes? How many of us came to understand the shared challenges in local government, the importance of a common front at the Roundhouse, the fact that politics is above all about communication, trust and relationships? That is the main lesson I learned from observing Bill at these dinners. That friendships are not segmented by political views, at least at the local level. We all want to help our neighbors; in the best way we feel that we can.

But in the front is the main dining area, and that was the place for Bill and me, where I had him to myself. For a long time, we met the second Tuesday of the month at the same round table in the middle of the room and feast on our common favorite, the Tuesday Special – Meatloaf and gravy. He would always ask to lighten up on the veggies and extra gravy on the side, and we would both gorge ourselves, drowning each morsel with iced tea.

We didn’t always talk about politics at those lunches. Sometimes we might digress into science at LANL, or how he wooed Pat, a Yankee Irish Catholic from Pennsylvania asking to marry the daughter of Kentucky Appalachia Baptists, or his time in the Air Force where he was the trailing spouse, following Pat’s assignments across the globe. But at some point, the discussion would circle back to that other ring, the sometimes boxing-ring called the Roundhouse.

He didn’t seem to talk fast, but I could never keep up. I was always too embarrassed to ask him to slow down and explain again the nuance of each bill, the conflicting priorities of this or that committee chair, how to finagle some concession from the 4th Floor. Bill had a seemingly perfect absorption of each critical issue before us, as well as any and all historical background in the decades of his tenure leading the League.

I know that my special friendship with Bill was mirrored and magnified across New Mexico. So many esteemed Senators and Representatives and Governors relied on his honesty, insight and wisdom. The decade I knew him is dwarfed by the 40 years that some of my colleagues had the pleasure of his friendship. But on the second Tuesday of the month, over meatloaf and iced tea, I had the famed Bill Fulginiti all to myself.

Those are moments I will always cherish. Goodbye my friend.

David Izraelevitz, Councilor
Los Alamos
Immediate Past President
Bill had a servant’s heart and showed that by serving his country in the Air Force for 8 years and serving our municipalities and the entire state for another 42 years.

I feel so fortunate and blessed that Bill and Pat made the decision to move to New Mexico in 1977. That single decision has shaped the lives of countless New Mexicans and changed our state forever.

I met Bill in March of 2006 at our district meeting. I was a newly elected mayor and as green as they come. I sat in awe of the knowledge and information that he passed on to us that day about the legislative session that had just ended. As I got more involved with the Municipal league and had the opportunity to get to know Bill better, I never lost that feeling of awe by just being around him.

Bill was a champion for all municipalities, big or small. He had a brilliant mind and wasn’t afraid to tackle any issue. He could take the most complicated issues and break them down where they actually made sense. Anytime any of us had problems, he would patiently listen as we explained our current predicament or crisis and then very calmly offer wise suggestions on what we could do. He very rarely told us what to do or how to do it, because he really enjoyed helping people realize their greatest potential. He wanted to see us succeed, and he was our biggest cheerleader.

Bill loved people, some of my favorite times spent with him were, of course, at the Bull Ring, just watching and listening to him interact with all the different people that would come through in an evening.

We played words with friends on our phones and many times Bill was playing at 2 or 3 in the morning. This past January when I was with my mom in Texas while she was so ill, the little message would pop up from Bill, "you’re up late, you ok, how’s your mom, how’s Ted?” He had such a big heart and truly cared about people.

The Municipal League thrived under his leadership. We are family. All of us, from the league staff to the elected officials to the people that manage the day to day operations at our municipalities. And Bill loved us all. He had a way of making you feel like you were the only person he wanted to be talking to. A parent loves each child differently, but they are all the favorite. We were all Bill’s favorite.

Bill believed in his heart that better cities mean a better New Mexico and he worked towards that every day. It is so hard to believe that we won’t have another opportunity to listen to Bill’s wisdom. I would love to hear his take on all the things that are going on in the world today. There is a huge hole in our hearts, but we are family and we will support each other through this terrible loss.

Linda Calhoun, Mayor
Town of Red River
When I think of Bill Fulginiti, I think of the twinkle in his eye, his ready smile, his easy laugh, and his warm and wonderful hugs. I remember his sense of humor, boundless support, loyalty, ideas, ideals, and his remarkably creative approach to problem-solving.

He manifested his favorite slogan, “Better Cities Mean a Better New Mexico!” As Chief Lobbyist for the New Mexico Municipal League, he championed such long term issues as taxing Internet sales, cybersecurity, and ethics reform. He took the lead in educating New Mexicans about issues like the controversial food tax, ransom-ware attacks on cities, and state finances and the budget.

Bill was a treasured resource with his vast institutional memory of the Municipal League itself and the history of most cities, towns, and villages in New Mexico. He was humble about the many awards he received, among them the New Mexico Distinguished Public Administrator award, the Governor’s Distinguished Public Service Award, and the Leadership New Mexico Distinguished Alumnus award. It was his pleasure to represent cities’ interest by serving on numerous Boards and Commissions such as the Water Trust Board.

For all these tangible real-world accomplishments, far greater are Bill’s intangible achievements in terms of his support and mentorship of all members of New Mexico’s municipal family. He took all new municipal officers under his large and generous wings, from police chiefs to librarians to city clerks to fire chiefs to councilors and mayors. He served as a coach and guide to newly elected officials. Bill’s vast institutional memory allowed him to offer advice on all the long-term thorny issues our cities face. His counsel was positive and empowering, based on his 43 years of municipal experience.

My late husband Ernie Mills was a close friend and admirer of Bill. He often said that Bill was one of the most “creatively receptive” people he had ever met. Bill embraced new ideas and dedicated himself to finding positive ways to manifest all kinds of plans and projects, many of which we now take for granted but looking back we realize it was Bill who first promoted them and put them on the map.

New Mexico owes Bill a huge debt of gratitude! All his devoted friends and the NMML family know that, and I write this as an expression of profound thanks to the great man Bill Fulginiti, in heartfelt appreciation for all he gave us. Bill was a leader among leaders, a Mayor of Mayors, but most importantly the kindest of friends.

Lorene Mills, Journalist/Interviewer
Report from Santa Fe
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REFLECTIONS AND TRIBUTES

Bill was one of my best friends. We first bonded through music. When my former wife and I were playing music as “Magic Moods” at La Fonda, my first cousin, former mayor of Questa and past President of New Mexico Municipal League Board of Directors, John Gaillour, took Bill and Pat to La Fonda to hear us. John never came back, but Bill and Pat became some of our biggest fans. Bill was so open hearted and generous; we became friends immediately.

As a result, we played for many years at Bill and Pat’s annual legislature party in their garage. Magic Moods then played for the Municipal League conferences throughout the state. Including a gig in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Bill loved his job at the Municipal League. He put his heart and soul into serving. He was respected by everyone from coworkers, to State Governors, and legislators. He always put the people of New Mexico before politics. As a Board member, I have had the chance to see first hand how the board always looked to him for direction. He gave back the truth and never played games. That is not an easy thing to do in this world and he did it with sincerity and grace. He was deeply committed and worked hard with Legislators to pass laws which enriched the towns and villages of New Mexico.

All this only made me admire him more. He was a true New Mexico treasure. I will miss Bill very much. I will miss his dedication, sincerity, and open heart. I will miss the tequila and sushi. I will miss the laughs and songs. I have been very privileged to have Bill as a friend. I and New Mexico have lost a true Champion.

Michael G. Rael Sr., Judge
Village of Questa

For over 30 years I had the privledge to call on Bill for all things governmental, municipal and legislative. He mentored me by providing me guidance and friendship.

Whenever I cam to his office I called him brother Bill, we hugged each other, ate a lot of candy and discussed issues and legislation.

Our conversations and dinners at the Bull Ring are memories that are a part of me forever.

It is with a heavy heart that I say goodbye to my brother. He will live long in our hearts and memories.

Dave Venable, Mayor
Villlage of Cloudcroft
I met Bill through then Director, Eric Pfeiffer, of what was the City of Albuquerque’s Office of Economic Development some 25 years ago. I was under contract through OED to do community-based economic revitalization on the Central Avenue Historic Route 66 Corridor and 4th Street, which had served in earlier iterations as both Route 66 and El Camino Real. Eric arranged a meeting with Bill who I knew of however never met.

Bill was interested in the potential of my work for Albuquerque and the potential for a number of our rural communities. He connected me with a couple of the federal programs with resources housed in several New Mexico state agencies. He was also interested in my work on Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in another state, which although legislatively empowered for New Mexico had not been successfully implemented. He connected me to two legislators who I assisted moving new policy forward amending state BID legislation to try and streamline the process.

I was pleased to have a leader, a partner who was a bridge. He believed in the power of good government and the important work of civil servants to increase the quality of life for our citizens, especially poor rural towns and villages. In my years of collaborating with Bill and the Municipal League, I saw the power of good government between the various local, regional and state agencies in action. Bill bridged our all too often partisan divide, our tendency to segment rural from metropolitan life in our policy, regulation, funding and implementation.

In 2003, I became Director of the New Mexico MainStreet Program in the state’s Economic Development Department. I knew I had several allies cultivated in previous work with Bill. I knew on most days I could drop in to his office, when he wasn’t at committee meetings or at board meetings of the state commissions and authorities he served on. I could share thoughts on policy changes, funding and the potential of new initiatives. His gentle humor poked at unrealistic thoughts and guided toward more productive ends.

Bill and his incredible Municipal League staff engaged our MainStreet professional revitalization specialists in their annual conference, their regular training programs for municipal elected officials and administrators. I developed many good friends and colleagues all in pursuit of a better quality of economic health and opportunity for their communities. Again it was about bridge and networking, building partnerships with limited resources to build more resilient and sustainable local economies.

During the current threat of COVID-19, I hope we all can draw on Bill’s spirit of the power of good government to address the health and community economic development issues we all face together.

I will miss Bill personally and professionally. My condolences to his family, friends and staff.

Rich Williams, former Director
New Mexico MainStreet Program 2003-2019
THE MUNICIPAL REPORTER - MEMORIAL ISSUE
WILLIAM FULGINITI 1941 - 2020
Hi everybody, this is Gordy Hicks, I wanted to share my memories of Bill Fulginiti.

I first met Bill in the early 1980’s at the Municipal League Building. I had heard of Bill and how smart he was. After being in his office and visiting with him, I realized he was not only a smart man but very down to earth. He was very easy to talk to. He brought in Regina and the staff, I realized he also had very smart women surrounding him, not only smart but good looking.

We then went to the session that was going on. He knew everyone and everyone knew and respected him. Here was this big man with so much knowledge that he was willing to share it with everyone. After hearing him present several Bills, I realized he not only loved his work but loved all the municipalities and was truly concerned about their needs.

Bill and myself seemed to click from day one and he always called me his little brother. It was such an honor to think that someone that smart was sharing his wisdom with someone like me. He told me it was very important to get involved in the League and serve on as many committees as I could. I think I have served on almost every committee.

The one thing I thought was so neat was how he treated small and large municipalities the same. He made sure all their concerns were addressed and made sure he did all he could to get them passed into laws.

All through the 1980’s grant money was fairly easy to get, but when money got tight, he could always figure out a way to come up with language and amendments to make sure our Bills got passed.

From the beginning I realized how important it was to be very careful how we worded the Bills. He always had the right language to put in to address our concerns. He had the one on one with our representatives and senators, and could get across what we wanted. I lost count of how many Bills we debated on. I felt honored the year I went to National Convention and Bill wrote up the language for me to fight unfunded mandated and many many more. With the internet sales and shipping things from state to state, we realized we were missing out on revenue. Bill and his staff worked very hard on this. He once bought a jacket on the internet and not only paid for the jacket but paid the taxes as an example of how important it was to get the tax on internet sales.

Bill told me to get involved in other organizations which I did, and I realized Bill was known and respected by many organizations around the state like the Council of Governments the RPO’s, the DOT and many more, not just the municipalities.

Sometime before his surgery Bill asked me if I could make a couple of canes for him. I made him a couple, one was made from Oak and looked like a chain, he always told me how much he loved and appreciated them. But it was me that was honored to make them for my brother Bill. This year at Municipal Day in Santa Fe, Bill got up to give one of his speeches on how the Bills were going so far. When he got up, he held up his cane and gave me a thumbs up. I will never forget how good that made me feel. When Bill had his knee surgery, he had both knees done at once so he wouldn’t have as much down time and be away from his job as long, he loved the municipalities that much.

I went to see Bill when he was in the hospital, I asked him where he grew up, I figured he grew up on a farm and rode horses all the time like I did. He laughed and said he had never even been on a horse. He was just bowlegged from bad knees.

At one of the board meetings I brought a couple of bowls that I had made to show him. He saw one he liked and most of you remember he offered me $600 for it. He told me, now you are an artist for selling something for that kind of money. I know he did it for me, to show everyone what my bowls are worth. That’s the kind of man he was.

For one of his birthdays, I decided to make him a deacon’s bench out of cherry wood we had everyone sign the back of it, because it was something that was given to him from the League, and once again to help
me out he put it at the League office. To this day the bench and the bowl are still at the office for everyone to see.

Every year I saw Bill work with the newly elected treasurer of the League giving them the knowledge and skill to work up for the next three years to be League president.

Watching Bill at our state conference was amazing as he gave the reports of everything that happened that year. I never once saw him blow up on anyone, he treated everyone with nothing but respect. I think through his example others realized this is the way we need to run our meetings, by showing everyone respect. I know I will never be as smart as Bill, but I feel honored to have all the information he has taught me throughout the years.

He always seemed to bring more programs to the League to help the municipalities. One of the ones I think is great is the MOLI program. It gives the cities, towns and villages certification for their elected individuals. This makes it easier for all of us to know we are making the right decisions at our council meetings.

I know other people have many things to say about Bill, so in closing I just want to give my condolences to his wife and family, the New Mexico Municipal League staff, the board and everyone throughout all the state of New Mexico, for the loss of a very big man, my big brother Bill. I know Bill will be greatly missed.

Gordy Hicks, Councilor
City of Socorro

It truly is hard to overstate the impact Bill Fulginiti had on New Mexico. While he worked for the municipalities directly, his impact was felt throughout the entire state irrespective of whether people knew it. I first met Bill in 1986 shortly after I went to work for the Department of Finance and Administration. Almost from the beginning he had an impact of the work I did even if I was not always smart enough to take his advice. Bill had a remarkable way of telling you that you were wrong in a really kind way which seemed to reflect his belief that in the political world is rarely good to make enemies as you never know when you will need an opponent's assistance.

As my career developed I continued to rely on him as a trusted mentor and as someone who always seemed to know what was happening all around the state. Later in my career when our positions on issues were sometimes at odds Bill never ceased to be kind and willing to share of his knowledge. As a friend and mentor I will miss Bill greatly but New Mexico is truly a better place because of his deep commitment to our communities.

James Jimenez, Executive Director
New Mexico Voices for Children
Former City Manager Rio Rancho
Former Cabinet Secretary Department of Finance

I always will remember Bill Fulginiti as a man who accomplished great things. Two of them, the New Mexico Municipal League and the New Mexico Self Insurers' Fund, fill the critical needs of municipalities throughout the state. Since I never heard him brag about his past, I only learned about some of his other life achievements in his obituary. All are impressive, each one uniquely Bill Fulginiti.

He was skilled in creating solutions and he did so with the wisdom that encompasses respect and kindness. The family-like atmosphere ever present at the League office is a testament to the importance that relationships were to Bill. He and Reggie created the loving environment that will live on for years to come. I think he learned from everything he did. I doubt he let a failure go by without reaping its underlying lesson. Maybe that is why he was unflappable. He had simply seen it all over the years and took it in stride since. In the midst of uncertainty or conflict, Bill's quiet smile could calm the room. He was simply a wonderful human who I am so grateful to have known. Vaya con Dios, Bill. See you on the other side!

Diane Gibson, Councilor
City of Albuquerque
I had the honor of meeting Bill Fulginiti in April of 1984 right after I got myself elected to the Village of Bosque Farms Village Council. I had heard about Bill from my fellow Councillors and began my relationship with him at our District meeting held in Red River that year. I asked a question about the relationship between our Municipal Clerk and Governing Body…I guess the question interested him because Bill asked me to visit with him after the meeting. Then off we went. I was a green, baby elected official and a green, baby young man. Bill took me under his large wing and was a huge presence for these last thirty-seven years.

Bill helped set me on the course to work my way through the New Mexico Municipal League leadership ladder in 1986. While serving as Treasurer, he called me one day and suggested I come to Santa Fe to sign a check. He had a habit of asking his Treasurers to sign payroll checks and other checks that the Board may have an interest in. I pushed back a little, but he told me I really may want to make the trip to Santa Fe. We were paying off the mortgage on the League office early and he wanted me to sign the check. I showed up and was presented with some ridiculously enormous check—$175,000—or so. It was the biggest single check I had ever signed. He assured me the League had the funds for the check to clear. I think he thought I was going to pass out. Anyway, we paid off the building and celebrated at the Bull Ring. I was not much of a drinker but remembered Hawkeye Pearce of “M*A*S*H” fame requesting “a painfully dusty, dry martini” so that’s what I ordered because it sounded cool. “Gin or vodka”, the server asked me. Oops. No idea. “Vodka,” chimed in Bill. Sure. He then suggested, “it’s cheaper and easier to simply ask for vodka on the rocks.” Okay Bill.

Bill assisted me in a wonderful life lesson…I was the chairman of the League’s budget committee. I got it into my head that we were spending a crazy amount of money on coffee. I asked Bill about this critically important issue and line item. “We get lots of visitors and go through a lot of coffee”, he told me. Well, that was no good. I was going to save the budget and instructed Bill to put out a jar for people to pay for their coffee. No more free coffee! Bill went along with his young chairman. I showed back up at the League office a couple of weeks later. I noticed staff was rather cool to me. Bill greeted me and said we needed to talk. He shut the door to his office and said, “Scott, I think we need to think about the coffee fund.” He guided me along explaining the error of my righteous over the coffee budget. Finally, he let me off the hook in his wonderful, gentle way, “perhaps we should bring back the coffee and let’s choose our fights a little better next time.” Okay Bill. He reminded me about the coffee fund drama to the end.

We traveled all over between 1986 and 1990. He ran my campaign and got me elected to the National League of Cities Board of Directors. New Mexico’s first member on the Board. I was elected because of Bill and I know that they were voting for Bill—I was just his stand-in. He was revered by all those folks in DC and across the United States even back then.

My favorite memory of this time was when I was Bill’s Immediate Past President. Mayor Tom Taylor succeeded me as President of the League in 1990. We had a running practical joke scam going against each other for a year or so. Tommy and I decided to turn our devious thoughts against Bill and League staff. We started this elaborate joke that was three months in the making. All the buildup was to lead to Tommy and I getting into a physical fist fight during a Board meeting. The plan went off as we hoped. We had everyone believing that there was a full-scale feud between the two of us. Bill even counseled both of us about it. Finally, during a Board meeting, Bill’s President, the Honorable Tom Taylor, launched himself over a table, tackled me and we both did the best faux fighting we could muster in front of the stunned Board members as we grappled on the floor. Dan Dible ended the “fight” by dumping a pitcher of ice water on us. We both stood up, proud of our efforts awaiting the reviews from the crowd. Bill just looked at us, took a breath and said, “the next item on the agenda is…” Okay Bill. Remember stay cool regardless of what’s thrown at you.

After my service as an elected official, I was fortunate to work as a professional lobbyist with Bill beginning in 1989. I was able to watch a master lobbyist work. Representing cities meant I got to work with Bill. He continued to teach me, mentor me and keep me in check for all these years. There was nothing like a tax discussion between Bill and then Taxation and Revenue Committee Chairman Rep. Jerry Sandel. Two brilliant tax minds going at it was a classroom for a young lobbyist. Bill continued his intellectual discussions on tax and finance later with Senator John Arthur Smith.
Just listening was an honor. I was privileged to work with Bill on behalf of my clients and municipal issues. It was so easy to follow Bill when testifying in Legislative committee hearings. “I agree with everything Bill Fulginiti just said.” He made it so easy for us because of the mastery he had on tax statutes and municipal law.

I owe much to Bill Fulginiti. Sure, he called me every time the meatballs arrived, he gave me a parking space, he listened to my ideas, we worked together and had so many laughs. But Bill helped raise me. How do you thank some one that does that? Over the last several years, I made it a habit of kissing Bill’s hand when I saw him. Most thought I was being a lambe. I think he knew I was trying to show him the amount of respect and love I have for him.

I am reminded of the Sidney Poitier movie from the 60's. To Sir with Love is the story of a strong, patient teacher dealing with a bunch of young kids. He guides them through their senior year of high school. The theme song asks,

The time has come
For closing books and long last looks must end
And as I leave
I know that I am leaving my best friend

A friend who taught me right from wrong
And weak from strong, that’s a lot to learn
What, what can I give you in return?

If you wanted the moon
I would try to make a start
But I would rather you let me give my heart
To Sir, with love

Rest well Sir. Thank you, Bill.
Scott Scanland
NMML President 1988 - 1989

When I think about Mr. Fulginiti, I feel blessed. I'm thankful for the opportunity to have known him. To have worked with him. To have had him as part of my life. He encouraged me to get involved in Municipal Government. Encouraged me to be on boards and committees, supported me to do more. Gave me a chance to make a difference. He told me he sees a leader in me, and because he believed, I believed in myself that much more.

Bill was a true leader. He had the ability to bring out leadership in others. He led a team, a family through our Municipal League that flourished under his guidance. Bill’s presence was always felt and for many, that presence will last a lifetime. A respected, valued, knowledgeable man who brought about change, who helped lay foundations for our Municipalities, foundations that will continue to serve us for years.

I will miss walking into the League Office to visit Bill. I will miss sitting in his office, miss eating the candy that was always on his desk. What a privilege. A privilege we have been deprived of too soon. Unexpectedly we lost our friend. We lost a mentor who carried an enormous amount of wisdom, grace, class, and love for our Municipal family. A powerful presence that will forever be felt, Bill Fulginiti.

Mr. Fulginiti, it was an honor knowing you.

Elise A. Larsen, Judge
City of Grants

I was fortunate enough to know Bill Fulginiti through a lot of different public service roles. When I was in the state Senate he was there fighting for municipalities. Then as State Auditor, we worked closely to help cities with tough financial issues. But as Mayor, I saw the true brilliance and tenacity of all Bill stood for. He was a mentor and friend in the trenches of policy battles big and small, there was no better partner for us than Bill in standing up for Albuquerque.

His dedication and the impact of his 40 years of leadership is legendary, and irreplaceable. So many of us all around New Mexico will miss him for decades to come.

Tim Keller, Mayor
City of Albuquerque
I'm sure I can't say anything that hasn't already been said about our wonderful friend, mentor and leader Bill Fulginiti; and I know most of you will have said it much more eloquently than I. And for that I thank you!

I cannot begin to reflect on all the wonderful things Bill taught me over the years like patience, perseverance, gentleness, collaboration, thoughtfulness, caring, dedication and a love for Municipal Code and knowledge of the New Mexico tax structure - to mention only a few. The State of New Mexico is a much better place because of Bill Fulginiti, and I believe each of us who were privileged to be touched by his grace, is also a better human being because of Bill. Bill’s devoted service to the Municipal League and ALL the other organizations he helped form and/or guide to make cities, towns and villages healthier, will not go unnoticed for decades I’m sure. His knowledge, foresight and art of negotiation will be sorely missed.

Bill filled this world with grace and love. So, rest in peace dear Bill – your smile, and warm greeting will remain with me the rest of my life. Thanks for being my friend,

Judy Stubbs, Councilor
City of Roswell
NMML President 1997-1998 and 2002-2003

When we lose someone close to us, it sets our mind and emotions in a million different directions. For many of us it begins with sadness. From here, we might feel anger, denial, nostalgia, fond memories, and much more. Each of us has our own way of dealing with loss.

For me, my initial reaction was one of shock and disbelief. We know that no one lives forever, but it didn’t seem possible that Bill was gone. How could this be? Bill was vibrant, brilliant, kind and humorous. He was our rock. He looked after and took care of us, on many levels. Once again, it was a reminder that life is precious and never to be taken for granted. As my abuela used to say ‘solo Dios manda.’ (“No one but God is in charge.”)

From the first day I met Bill he welcomed me and made me feel like a friend. I soon realized that it had nothing to do with me. Bill made everyone feel that way. He was never too busy to answer questions. He always made me feel like my concerns were important and never failed to get me answers or lead me to the best resource.

Although my grief continues, it is overshadowed by gratitude and appreciation. Our lives are marked by peaks and valleys, and they often come at the most unexpected times. I know I will continue to have bouts of sadness, but our charge is to keep serving. Bill was the consummate public servant. He never sought notoriety or praise. He simply went about the business of protecting and advocating for municipalities. We all know that it is now up to each of us to do our part to continue Bill’s legacy.

Many of us hope that we leave this world a little better than when we entered it. Bill, you’ve set the bar. I admire so much about Bill, not least how he navigated among the political diversity (and polarity) that he dealt with on a daily basis. One of my goals is to emulate that ability.

I choose to focus on the good fortune I had of meeting Bill and getting to know him. I hope to learn from his example and be a better person. Paul McCartney sings, “The love you take, is equal to the love you make.” I have no doubt Bill left this world overflowing with love.

Jack Torres, Mayor
Town of Bernalillo
I first met Bill Fulginiti at a Newly Elected Officials seminar in 2004 shortly after I had been elected as Trustee for the Village of Los Ranchos de Albuquerque. Little did I know at that time that the main presenter at the forum would soon become my mentor and trusted friend. We meet a lot of people in our paths of life and most will be blurred faces, many acquaintances and colleagues, fewer still are called friends but only a select few touch our hearts and souls in such a manner as to become our mentors and very dearest of friends…of which Bill was for me.

In 2005, I was elected to the NMML board and I pursued a title of Certified Municipal Official through the League’s Municipal Officials Leadership Institute and with those actions, was frequently tutored by Bill and the other NMML staff members in municipal government. When I became interested in serving as a League Officer, I went to our resident sage, Bill, for advise and he gave me the lay of the land on what would be involved in both the election and the office, as well as the succession of positions if election to each was successful. He didn’t sugar coat it and told me how much work it would take to get elected by the member municipalities and the responsibilities and time commitment involved in holding the various offices. In 2008, I was elected as the League’s Treasurer and continued with each office through the past president positions.

As an officer and past president, I worked closely with Bill and the NMML staff. I had the great pleasure to really get to know Bill through the NMML and NM Self-Insurers’ Fund work which included district, board and annual meetings, and a National League of Cities conference and NLC-RISC meeting each year through 2019. Having spent countless hours with Bill in meetings, from large to one-on-one, and in restaurants, hotel lobbies and bars, in cab rides and on walks, and in 3 days trapped in Savannah, GA with Bill and his wife Pat after a NLC-RISC conference in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma, you develop a unique depth of friendship. Spending this much time with a fellow extravert allows you to get to know a lot about each other, their families, backgrounds and lives. In fact, you become each other’s extended families.

Bill was a tremendous resource and asset for New Mexico’s local officials and communities. Legislators, state and county officials and even our governors through the years have sought Bill’s advice on challenges facing the state. He was highly respected nationwide which was evident in the National League of City conference trips we took as he was constantly called out by other state league executives and long-time public officials from across the country. He was treated with reverence at those events as one of the few very wise and all-knowing elders. Whatever the setting, Bill was a tireless lobbyist and fierce advocate, always fighting for issue and resolution acceptance and influencing the right people for the benefit of a sound governmental structure that would lead to prosperity for the state and its people.

Regardless of the time of year, be it the Legislative session or not, Bill took the time to answer your phone call and to greet you if you visited the office. He had a remarkable memory and would eagerly share his knowledge if requested. Bill was kind, thoughtful, welcoming and gracious, and a true gentleman. Regardless of his own health or state of fatigue he always asked how you were doing and really cared about you. He was friendly to all and assured the NMML members that he and his staff were available and ready to serve them.

I feel very fortunate to have been a friend of Bill Fulginiti. I’ll greatly miss my dear friend and mentor, his charm with that welcoming smile and sparkling eyes, and the chuckle that was soon to come in our conversation. I was a much better leader and contributed more to my community’s success because of Bill’s tutoring and influence. New Mexico and its municipalities owe a lot to Bill, as they have greatly benefited from the knowledge he shared, the work that he led and was accomplished, and the role-model he provided. Bill Fulginiti, Champion of New Mexico and its people, thank you. Words cannot express how much we as a state and I, personally, will miss him.

Mary Homan, former Councilor
Los Ranchos de Albuquerque
NMML President 2012-2013
NMSIF Chair 2018-2019
THE MUNICIPAL REPORTER - MEMORIAL ISSUE
WILLIAM FULGINITI 1941 - 2020
New Mexico is a better place to live, love, work and raise our families because of the life of Bill Fulginiti, Executive Director, of the New Mexico Municipal League.

I was a member of the Roswell City Council in 1977 when Bill Fulginiti moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico to become the Executive Director of the New Mexico Municipal League. We have been friends a long time. It has been my honor and pleasurer to serve on the New Mexico Municipal League Board of Directors as Director at Large for the past 16 years.

Bill was a wonderful guy with a great sense of humor, a mind like a steel trap and a memory that could recall the facts and all the details of an event or piece of legislation. He was a professional wizard at solving municipal problems and was a mentor and counselor for many municipal officials and a handy resource for newly elected legislators. In addition, he was a valued advisor to many departments of state government. Bill Fulginiti probably knew more about New Mexico municipal and state government than anyone person.

His many awards and recognitions reflect the sincere appreciation organizations have had for Bill’s service and leadership. He was a valued member and leader of the many boards, commissions and organizations he served.

Bill’s vision for the New Mexico Municipal League provided quality education, effective lobbying, informational services and self-insurance for the 106 member municipalities at a bargain price. He took pride in the quality of service provided by his league staff. The New Mexico Municipal League is recognized nationally as a quality organization.

We will miss Bill Filginiti. He was a first class professional. His shoes will be hard to fill. Condolesces and blessings to his wife, Pat, family, league staff and a multitude of friends.

Steve Henderson
Councilor, City of Roswell
Hearing of Bill Fulginiti’s passing was devastating to me. I’ve known Bill since I was first elected to the Espanola city council in 2000. After attending the New Mexico Municipal League (NMML) Newly Elected Officials program, I gravitated to the NM Municipal League (NMML) because it is an entity like no other – an organization that had the backs of all municipal officials with a sense of “familia.” Bill understood that if municipal officials succeed, the State of New Mexico succeeds. Bill was a big part of that sense of familia. When I was elected to the National League of Cities Board, it soon became clear that Bill had the respect among all league directors across the country. Our very own Bill was a national leader. At that time, he was one of the longest-tenured State league directors and a mentor to many.

When I became NMML President after serving on the NMML Board, I now had more direct and frequent communication and involvement with Bill. His legislative, organizational, and political skills were always on full display as I witnessed them with nothing but amazement. For example, he helped me to write legislative bills from scratch and plan a national Hispanic summit in Northern New Mexico. We celebrated a milestone anniversary of the NMML at our annual conference in Las Cruces and I honored him for his service to all of our cities, towns, and villages. We certainly developed a special bond and friendship during that time.

I could go on and on about Bill and call to mind so many more fond memories – memories that I will treasure forever. Bill was a friend, mentor, and leader. His devotion and service to municipal governments will never be forgotten. The State of New Mexico has lost a one-of-a-kind leader. My heartfelt condolences go out to Bill’s wife, Pat, and the entire NMML family. If there is a Bull Ring in the after life, I will meet you there Bill. Rest In Peace. Siempre tu amigo.

Joe Maestas former Councilor
City of Espanola
NMML Past President 2006-2007

“New Mexico lost a true champion. In the six short years I knew Bill, he quickly became a friend and a mentor. As Executive Director of the New Mexico Municipal League, Bill fought to protect the cities, towns, and villages of New Mexico. Bill challenged me to be as involved as possible, which led to the formation of the New Mexico Mayor’s Caucus. Bill was easy to be around, easy to interact with, and easy to love. I will miss him.”

Greggory D. Hull, Mayor
City of Rio Rancho
BILL FULGINITI HONORED FOR THIRTY YEARS OF SERVICE TO NEW MEXICO LEAGUE, WHICH CELEBRATES ITS FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

More than 900 delegates, sponsors, exhibitors, and guests attended the New Mexico Municipal League’s (NMML) 50th Annual Conference held August 29-31 in Las Cruces. New Officers and Directors were elected during the Annual Business Meeting, and participants enjoyed social activities in downtown Las Cruces and a concert/dance by the Pink Flamingoes at the National Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum.

During the conference, all 103 members of the League simultaneously declared, by written proclamation, William F. Fulginiti Day on August 30 in each of their municipalities to honor him and to say thanks for his thirty years of service to NMML and its membership. Roger Makin, NMML Communications Coordinator, said that Fulginiti “was completely surprised. He had no idea that 103 city councils/commissions could do such a thing and him not hear about it.”

Fulginiti was also presented with a “Certificate of Appreciation” from Governor Bill Richardson and with a plaque from the NMML membership, board, and staff. The plaque contained words describing him as “El Gran Amigo de Las Cuidades (The Great Friend of All Municipalities).”

During his distinguished tenure at NMML, Fulginiti was one of the founders of the New Mexico Self Insurer’s Fund, whose primary function is to provide workers’ compensation, general liability, auto, property, and health insurance coverage to New Mexico’s cities and towns. He also initiated the first bond pool for municipalities that provides them with access to national bond markets. In addition, he was one of the founders of the National League of Cities Mutual Insurance Company that reinsures state municipal league self-insurance pools in 22 states. He has been serving as Chairman of the Board of NLC Mutual Insurance for twenty years, and was twice a member of the National League of Cities Board of Directors.

Prior to joining NMML in 1977, Fulginiti served as Assistant Executive Director for Legislation at the Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities, where he was a lobbyist and implemented the organization’s legislative program. He also served as the Deputy Director for Community Development Services at the Pennsylvania League.

Among the honors that Fulginiti he received are the (New Mexico) Governor’s Distinguished Public Service Award in 2003, the New Mexico Distinguished Public Administrator Award in 1992, and selection as an “Outstanding Young Man of America” in 1974.

The National League of Cities congratulates Bill Fulginiti on the occasion of thirty years of outstanding service to NMML and its member municipalities and to the New Mexico Municipal League on its fiftieth Anniversary.
In the world of State Municipal League Directors, Bill Fulginiti was the wise gentle giant, the quiet leader nationally respected for his remarkable effectiveness as the advocate for New Mexico local governments, strategic and firm with an understated passion, a quiet determination and an amazing ability to prevail, truly a force of nature. He was a professional and personal friend to whom I often turned for advice and perspective. He provided wise counsel and his word was gold.

Bill was the one who would sit quietly as colleagues would seek him out, like a powerful magnet, a font of wisdom. Bill was beyond special and as I shared with Pat, I am grateful to have known him, worked with him and had him as a friend.

Don Borut, Executive Director (ret.)
National League of Cities

Bill Fulginiti had a special ability to connect with and make those around them feel immediately at ease. I first met him at a National League of Cities (NLC) conference in 1992 after I had just been appointed Executive Director of the League of Kansas Municipalities. He probably sensed my newcomer’s panic, so he quickly introduced himself and began showing me the ropes. I am sure he offered some sage advice, but what he mainly did was give me a powerful sense of belonging with our group of state municipal league leaders from around the country.

Over the next few years I learned to listen carefully to Bill, and I relied on his wisdom and counsel as we worked through issues at the NLC or at our state leagues. He made all of us proud to be part of a noble cause, working to advance the best interests of city and town governments around the country. When I retired in 2016, Bill and Pat generously gave my wife, Manuela, and me a beautiful pottery vase by the New Mexico artist R. Diane Martinez. More than ever now it will remind me of Bill’s smile, generosity, and warmth. We are all better persons for having been graced by his presence in our lives.

Bill was a friend and mentor to me since I joined the ranks of state municipal league directors 18 years ago. Since I was from Arizona, we often referred to each other as “neighbor” since our geography and legislative experiences were similar. Bill always had a smile and a fun story to tell each time our paths crossed at NLC League, Mutual-related events or over the phone. I appreciated his steady, even-keeled nature, even in the face of major challenges. I will miss him greatly.

Ken Strobeck, former Executive Director
League of Arizona Cities and Towns

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Chris McKenzie, Executive Director (ret.)
League of California Cities