

Goodbye 'Uncle Hal': Former Hackensack High School principal Harold Bloom dies at 89

[Rodrigo Torrejon](#), North Jersey Record Published 4:13 p.m. ET Jan. 17, 2019 | Updated 5:45 p.m. ET Jan. 17, 2019

What became a nearly 40-year career in education for Harold Bloom, a former Hackensack High School principal, started with a romantic ultimatum.

In the Bronx, he had just met his future wife, Rita, and she wasn't one to date someone without career goals, said Linda Bloom, Harold and Rita's daughter. So Rita made her conditions clear.

"Mom said 'I don't date anyone who doesn't go to college,'" said Linda Bloom. "Next day, he enrolled in college."

Bloom died Monday from complications connected to aspiration pneumonia at Hackensack University Medical Center, his daughter said. He was 89.



On Jan 17, 2016, The Maywood Historical Committee held their first members of the Maywood Hall of Fame at an induction ceremony Hall of Fame inductee Harold Bloom (Photo: Bob King/NorthJersey.com)

Bloom was the Hackensack High School Principal for 23 years, from 1969 to 1992.

"Mr. Bloom was a beloved principal and well respected leader in our school community," acting Hackensack Superintendent Rosemary Marks said. "We are saddened to learn of his passing and extend our deepest condolences to the Bloom Family."

Bloom's college degree earned him a date, a 68-year marriage and a career in the Hackensack school system that began in 1954 and ended in 1992, when he retired as the high school principal.

In 1954, Bloom started as a history teacher before moving his way up to become the head of the school's history department, Linda Bloom said. It was there and then that he became good friends with then-principal Carl Padovano.

"Carl Padovano became principal and he said, 'I need you as my assistant,'" Linda Bloom said. "Dad said: 'No. I need to teach classes.' "

Padovano, who would become the Hackensack school superintendent, made the offer non-negotiable, and soon Bloom became the assistant principal. By 1969, he had become the high school principal.

For nearly four decades, Bloom made his mark on the school, including modernizing the library by adding a media center.



Harold Bloom (Photo: File photo)

Today, when you drive through the high school's campus, you can look up and see Bloom's name on the sky bridge over First Street. In 2015, the school renamed the bridge in his honor, leaving a mark as indelible as the changes he had made during his tenure.

By most accounts, Bloom was a consummate educator. His desire to teach and educate came with him into retirement in Maywood, where he lived.

"He was an educator who cared about everybody learning," said Maywood Mayor Adrian Febre.

When he retired, Bloom became a library trustee for Maywood and was "instrumental" in turning around the library's financial situation, Febre said, bringing the library into the 21st century.

While not a loud man, Bloom's presence spoke for him, Febre said, and everybody knew him as "Uncle Hal," the Maywood guy who could throw out a one-liner like a modern day Henny Youngman.



On Sept. 26, 2015, Hackensack High School renamed its First Street bridge in honor of Harold Bloom for his 39 years of service to the school district and community. (Photo: Tom Hart/Special to NorthJersey.com)

"He was just a sweet guy," Febre said. "When you got his approval, it wasn't like an ordinary compliment. It meant more. A compliment from him meant 10 times more."

In honor of Bloom, Febre lowered the flags at Maywood Borough Hall and the Maywood library. And, as one final tribute, Febre hopes to rename the young adult wing of Bloom's beloved library after him.

Bloom leaves behind his wife Rita, daughters Linda and Heidi and son Steven. Services have not yet been scheduled by the family.