



## *Dr. Bill*

### A Man and a Life to Remember

by Mrs. Gloria Kennett

My husband, affectionately known as Dr. Bill, was truly a great human being. A man of high moral standards and compassion, he was loyal, committed to his community, his family, his peers, and of course, Sequoia Hospital. A born leader; he led by example, always trying to do what was right and just, inspiring others to do the same. Bill was a top physician and surgeon, highly respected by his peers and adored by his patients. He had a twinkle in his eye that made each and everyone he met feel special. He loved people and was friendly and open to everyone he met.

Bill was born in 1918 in Carson City, Nevada; was graduated from UC Berkeley in 1940 and graduated Cum Laude from Loyola University Medical School in Chicago in 1943. He entered the Navy as a physician in the Submarine Service where he first worked on the diving compression tables which are still in use today. He did a tour of duty in the South Pacific, and then after the war he was sent as part of Admiral Byrd's last expedition to the South Pole. Upon Bill's discharge, he did his specialty training in OBGYN at Stanford University. When he completed his four year residency in 1951 he then set up a private practice in Redwood City and began his long association with Sequoia Hospital. Bill told me he chose OB because it was the happy side of medicine.

Bill had a passion for medicine, constantly attending medical seminars and reading medical journals to improve his skills and to be at the cutting edge of his profession. Throughout his career he was an innovator – interested in new techniques, striving to be the best he could be. After attending a seminar in Los Angeles and training at a hospital there, he learned the new technique of Laparoscopy. When he returned he was instrumental in bringing Laparoscopy to Sequoia Hospital. He was the first doctor at Sequoia Hospital to utilize this new technique and he trained other doctors in this new skill. Bill had a strong work ethic. He would not just complete a task, he would do it well!!

Bill was the motivating force behind the founding of the Peninsula OBGYN Society, and served as one of the early presidents. He was also a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons and a Fellow of the College of OBGYN. Bill was exceptionally generous and did many selfless acts that no one knew about. When Claire Delaney, a nurse here at the hospital, came to him with a request from her priest, Father Davenport, to donate an X-Ray machine for the needy in Viet Nam, Bill was able to acquire one and arranged with an Admiral friend of his at Moffett Field to ship it to Viet Nam free of charge. None of us knew about this until shortly before his funeral.

Bill was a handsome man, always impeccably groomed and stylishly dressed. He enjoyed jazz, was a great dancer and loved a good time. He was a sports enthusiast – loved the 49ers and all Stanford games, whether football, basketball or baseball. He was an avid reader with a thirst for knowledge, especially history, great leaders, war heroes, and men of accomplishment.

Sequoia Hospital was his home away from home. He would go to the hospital at 6:30 AM for early surgery and to make rounds each day. He would then continue with a heavy office schedule. Whenever his patients went into labor, they his priority – sometimes interrupting office hours, sometimes interrupting dinner and sometimes in the middle of the night. You know, every night he would lay out his cloths for the next day, so if a call came during the night he could get to the hospital in a hurry. Also, for the same reason, he would never let his gas gauge go below half full.

Bill's whole life revolved around medicine and his family. The only rival that came close was his love of golf. Every Wednesday afternoon and every other weekend when he was off-call you would find him on the golf course. When he first took up golf he was such a busy doctor that he did not have enough time to dedicate to his new passion. He would come home each day for lunch and then be found hitting balls into a golf practice net in the back yard. At night he would read golf books from pros that he admired to help improve his swing and game. It helped to some degree, because eventually he became a very good golfer. Our vacations were planned around golf. He would read in the golf magazines about beautiful new golf courses in exotic places and the next thing you would know there we were. We had marvelous vacations together, often including other good friends. I took up golf in self-defense.

When Bill retired at age 75 in 1993 he received hundreds of wonderful letters from his patients professing that he was the best, kindest, most compassionate doctor that they had ever known. Bill always said to me that medicine is not an exact science, it is an art. Judging by his fan mail, I think Bill was a master of the art.

In ending, I would like to quote a few remarks that some friends made in letters they wrote to me after Bill died.

Dr. George Koenig, a retired Sequoia Physician wrote, "Virtually every woman on the peninsula must have been Bill's patient and they all adored him. For us Doc's he was a joy, only the highest standards, absolute and fearless honesty, total integrity. What a help he was to me when I first started, lots of sound advice, complete with friendship, and a relationship that never wavered. Every minute with Bill was a hole in one."

Fran Kearton, a friend, stated, "The world does not have enough men of his caliber to spare these days. I think Dr. Bill was one of the most beloved men I've ever known. He was a living example of all of the finest qualities of a true gentleman."

Wanda D'Arezzio, a patient said, "I was drawn to tears when I read the article in this morning's paper about my dear friend Dr. Kennett. I first met Dr. Kennett in 1958 when I was lucky enough to find him. I was pregnant with my second child. He was beyond a doubt the most caring doctor I have ever had the privilege of knowing. He really cared about what you said and would listen!"

Bob Kane, California Supreme Court Judge and Ambassador to Ireland, " You must know Gloria how very much we loved Bill. I often reflect on the blessings that flow from truly good human

beings. Knowing Bill for so many years, enjoying his wonderful sense of humor and admiring his citizenship and attachment to family, is a definite blessing.”

Bill's life was full and dedicated to the many people whose life he touched. He was a wonderful husband and devoted father to our six children. He made a real difference.

I am sure Bill is smiling upon us today knowing that he is being honored by the Sequoia Hospital that he loved, addressing the nursing shortage with the bold move of setting up an educational program here at Sequoia and by funding a needed scholarship program in his name.