



Dr. William Smith Jr.

February 7, 1926 - May 4, 2017

William “Bill” Smith, Jr. passed away on May 4th, 2017 after a short illness. Bill will be greatly missed by his son, Lee A. Smith, his daughter and son-in-law Ann and David Burgess, and his two grandchildren Taylor Alan Burgess and Sarah Elizabeth Burgess. In addition to his wife, Bill was predeceased by his parents, his three brothers Leo Smith (wife Dorothy), Waldo Smith (wife Pauline), Clyde Smith (wife Toxey) and his cousin Emma McHugh (husband Perry).

On September 7, 2012, Bill lost the love of his life, Ruby, his wife of 61 years.

Bill, or “Billy” as he was known as a child, was born in the small South Georgia town of Pearson on February 7th, 1926. He was the second son of William Tyre Smith, Sr. and his second wife Elizabeth Juanita “Bessie” Clements. With his first wife Jerushia O’Steen, Bill’s father had two sons: Leo and Waldo Smith. With Bessie his father had one other son Clyde Smith. Bill had no sisters, but there were two special women that he thought of as his sisters: his first cousin Emma Tomlinson-McHugh, whom he thought of as an older sister, and her daughter Ann McHugh-Huxford whom he thought of as a younger sister. His parents were more educated than most people of their age at that time. (Both had taught school at one time in their lives.) They valued education very highly for their four sons and sacrificed much to further their sons’ education in colleges. Bill’s earliest memories were watching his father run a successful Ford dealership in Pearson. Unfortunately, the Great Depression took its toll on this business, and his father had to close it in the early 1930’s. Vowing “never having to meet a payroll again, “ his father opened a small grocery store that he named “The Farmers Store.” Bill, his brothers, his cousin Emma, his nephew Frank Q. Smith, and even his mother worked diligently long hours to keep the store up and running. It was in this store that Bill’s father instilled a strong work ethic in Bill that continued all of his life.

Bill graduated from Pearson High School, which was an eleven grade high school, in 1943 as valedictorian. With only a small suitcase in hand, Bill left home to go to college at the Georgia School of Technology. Starting as a freshman at Georgia Tech, Bill decided he would thereafter be referred to as “Bill Smith” rather than “Billy Smith”. Although Bill’s mother had always lived what he considered an exemplary Christian life that she daily imparted to her sons, taking them to church every Sunday, it was not until shortly after

arriving at Georgia Tech that he felt a more personal connection to the Christian faith when his “dorm officer” upon checking him in stated “Mr. Smith, I will see you in church this Sunday. If you don’t have a ride, I will pick you up.” Bill became active First Baptist Church’s Baptist Student Union where he made many lifelong friends and developed a strong personal faith.

As Bill neared graduation from Georgia Tech in 1947 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Physics, he began to question his goal of becoming a Physicist. He did not want to sit in a lab all day. It was at this time he decided to become a medical doctor, a profession that proved to be common in his close family. In the fall of 1947, he became a freshman at the Medical College of Georgia in Augusta, GA where his two brothers Leo and Clyde and his father’s twin brother, Henry Smith, had attended. Bill graduated in 1951.

During the summer between his sophomore and junior years at medical school, Bill made a decision that would alter the rest of his life. He decided that he would work as a “summer staffer” at Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly in Black Mountain, North Carolina. Bill naturally thought that being a medical student, he would be assigned to work in the infirmary. But he wasn’t---he was assigned to mop and scrub floors in the cafeteria kitchen. While on the floor cleaning, he heard a crash- a waitress had dropped a tray of dishes. Looking up, he saw a beautiful young lady named Ruby Jean Angus. And so, Bill met the love of his life. Ruby was a sophomore at Oklahoma Baptist University (now Oklahoma State University) in Stillwater, OK. Ruby was two years younger, and was working towards a degree in journalism. Although they agreed they could date others after this first meeting, multiple letters back and forth and a memorable visit by Bill to Oklahoma convinced the two of them that they were meant for each other as life partners. Bill and Ruby were married on July 21, 1951 at the First Baptist Church in Ponca City, OK, the town where Ruby spent the majority of her childhood. In 2001, Bill and Ruby celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary at Callaway Gardens.

In August 1951, Bill and Ruby moved to Memphis, TN where Bill did a medical internship and Ruby taught English at a junior high school. In 1952 Bill and Ruby moved to Corryton, TN where Bill worked with a traditional “country doctor” doing a general practice. During a visit to Pearson in 1952, Bill checked in with the local draft board. The attendant said, “Dr. Smith, we have been looking for you and we have a doctor draft.” Bill and Ruby then moved to Bainbridge, GA where Bill served in the Air Force for two years during the Korean War. After serving in the Air Force Bill and Ruby moved to Oklahoma City, OK where Bill did a residency in orthopedics, having decided not to be a general practitioner. During their time in Oklahoma City, a son, Lee Angus Smith was born in 1956. Two and a half years later, a daughter, Ann Elizabeth Smith was born in 1958.

In July 1959, the young family moved to Tallahassee, FL where Bill established a practice of orthopedic surgery. Bill and Ruby found Tallahassee and the medical community quite welcoming. Also in 1959, the young family joined First Baptist Church. Their first work at

First Baptist was working with college students. During the mid-1960s Bill was asked to join the Deacon Board at First Baptist. He was a voice of calm and reason during some tense times at the church. Bill worked in the 11th grade Sunday School department and taught 5th grade Sunday school along with Ruby. When Ruby pioneered the use of video tape in teaching, Bill faithfully lifted a TV up 3 flights of stairs many Sundays. Bill also accompanied Ruby on several trips when she served on the church pulpit committee. Bill enjoyed the challenge of working with his many different patients and their various problems during his 29 years (1959-1988) of practice and often said his practice was constantly stimulating and never boring.

In 1968, Bill and Ruby purchased the first of their four recreational vehicles (campers). Bill enjoyed visiting many National and State Parks during their children's summer vacations. A special hobby during this time was identifying trees wherever the family travelled.

Upon retirement from private practice on January 29, 1988, Bill continued to do various Orthopedic related work. He worked with Family Practice residents, did evaluations for the VA, and worked with patients at Florida State Hospital. Additionally, Bill especially enjoyed doing upon retirement was working for CompHealth, a locum tenens company that would send he and Ruby (in their camper) around the country in small areas lacking an Orthopedist. Bill would say that the highlight of his "working retirement" years was a medical mission trip to Nigeria where in addition to working under extremely challenging conditions, he had the pleasure of meeting and working with Dr. Francis Collins, who later worked on the Genome Project and became the head of the National Institute of Health. In 2000, Bill was honored to be the recipient of the yearly I.B. Harrison M.D. Humanitarian Award.

Bill was a fine example of a Christian man to all who knew him. He always practiced patience, tolerance, kindness, forgiveness, modesty and generosity.

The Smith family would like to express special gratitude to a special friend and employee Willie Menter Hunter who worked with them for 50 years. The Smith family would also like to thank Bill's special caregivers during his last months: 1) His Covenant Hospice team: Mary Dean, Linda Ferchaud, Jessica Connell, Terry Devore, Connie McPherson; 2) The TMH Rehab team: Dr. Lorna Stewart, Bradley Stewart, RN, Jinger Deason; 3) the AUI team: Dr. Jonathan Mellquist, Dr. Robert Bradford, Michelle Martinez, Josh Sharp; 4) Cardiologist Dr. Gian Giove; 5) Vascular NP Candice Vanderschaaf; 6) the Infection team: Dr. Akshay Manohar; Dr. Herzog; Renette Gabriel NP; 7) Dr. Satish Mital, Primary Physician; 8) TMH team: Charlee Mehr, Daniel Molina, Kenyada Wright, Mona Wahva, Jake Obina, Martin Stich, Linda Lamango, Jason Keable, Jeremy Herron, Deborah Smith, Berneice Mercer-Lewis, Cody Bickel. And an extra special thanks to Derek Barfield, who provided home health care services for the last year of his life.

A Memorial Service will be held at First Baptist Church, Tallahassee on Saturday May 13th at 2:00 P.M. The family will greet friends after the service in the church Welcome Center.

Donations may be made to the Florida Baptist Children's Home in Bill's memory. Tholley Taylor with Lifesong (850.627.1111) is assisting the family with arrangements.

Cemetery

Events

Roselawn Cemetery

Tallahassee, FL, 32308

**MAY
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Memorial Service

02:00PM

First Baptist Church

108 West College Ave., Tallahassee, FL, US, 32301

Comments



“ I was one of Dr. Smith's first patients in Tallahassee. He set my broken arm when I was 7 years old, treated my dislocated ankle when I was 14 and gave me wise counsel for my aching back when I was in my 40's. He always made me feel better, both physically and spiritually. He will be missed. My sympathies to his family and friends.

Chris Roady

Chris Roady - May 09, 2017 at 06:42 AM