



IN MEMORIAM

Bill Piller



As a raw, young representative I first met a warm, friendly face with the 'Piller' smile at the Groote Schuur Cardiac Clinic in 1963 and left with my first ever order. That was the beginning of rewarding business and a personal relationship spanning 40 years.

Bill arrived in South Africa some 50 years ago, a youthful 30-year-old charged with instituting a training programme for medical technologists

in the Department of Cardiology at Groote Schuur Hospital. Born in Plymouth, England, in 1927, he had a happy childhood in London until the Second World War. Bill, aged 12, stayed at home to look after his mother. They experienced all the privations of families living in London at that terrible time, which left an indelible mark on his life. When the house across the road received a direct hit of a 500 lb bomb, killing its occupants and nearly killing him, Bill said that that was when he suddenly grew up. At age 17, he was conscripted into the British Army and served 3 years in the occupation in Germany – a huge and emotional experience.

Few know that Bill had refused an order to shoot a deserting British soldier in the back. He was court-martialed but later praised for his judgement by the court. The Nuremberg War crimes trials centred on this very issue: should one acquiesce to an order that violates natural law and decency, or refuse the order? Bill instinctively did the right thing according to his conscience. The roots of his gentle and non-aggressive nature germinated in his abhorrence for all he saw during those times of extreme violence. Bill was warm and engaging, and highly respected and regarded by all who knew him at work or socially. Few knew about his many accomplishments. He played the organ and the piano, loved singing and had a brown belt in judo. He was a devoted family man, unassuming and undemanding, kind and generous with his time and energy and always willing to help others.

Bill loved the fraternity of Freemasonry, lived according to its precepts of brotherly love, relief and truth, but work commitments precluded his rising to High Office. His humour could be quirky. He wanted to name his powerboat 'Pacemaker', but when he learned this was on Chris Barnard's boat, he named his 'Sino-Atrial Node'.

Most unfortunately, he was increasingly incapacitated by rheumatoid arthritis. Proud of his children, he suffered terribly over the untimely death of his daughter. The first of the small strokes that eventually killed him began a few days after his

daughter's death. Nevertheless, after retirement Bill worked as a volunteer for St Luke's Hospice where his daughter had been so lovingly cared for in the last weeks of her life.

Bill published 3 cardiac technology textbooks, compiled *A History of the Cardiac Clinic*, *Groote Schuur Hospital*, and wrote his memoirs.

Bill loved teaching and was available to anyone, even in retirement, whether a physician, surgeon or sales representative who sought his opinion.

His life was that of a great man. 'A person's life is like a wave – with great power it moves towards the shore, where it crashes, and without fuss, it ebbs away, back to the ocean from whence it came.' – Author unknown

K P Marcus

Bill Piller

In the 1950s, when the investigation and treatment of heart disease was in its infancy, the doctors starting the Cardiac Clinic at Groote Schuur Hospital identified a problem. The methods of investigation and treatment of patients with heart disease were dependent on technology, electronics and engineering beyond the understanding of the average medical graduate. Fortunately for many patients in this country they recognised the problem and recruited Bill Piller.

Bill joined the staff in 1956 and was instrumental in the development of the Clinic. He built and maintained much of the early equipment, set up the ECG service and the pacing service, and was an essential *and* productive member of the team that produced exceptional work in congenital and adult heart disease in the 60s and 70s.

Bill, or Mr Piller as we knew him, was instrumental in the education of generations of doctors. He taught us how to perform ECGs without destroying his precious equipment. We were impressed by his commitment to his patients' dignity, his insistence on the importance of maintaining privacy, the imperative of obtaining accurate and clinically useful information and the necessity of caring for expensive equipment.

As far as we know Bill was the first to practise as a cardiac clinical technologist in this country. He developed this profession as a specific category among health professionals and was involved in setting up the necessary training and educational standards and registration requirements with the statutory boards. He was the father of cardiac clinical technology in South Africa and established it as a rigorous discipline with strict entrance criteria and formal examinations at a national level. Many patients and physicians who are unaware of his contributions will owe their good health and the quality of their patient care to his teaching, enthusiasm and insistence on a standard of excellence.



Much that we take for granted today was not readily available in the past. Bill used to sharpen the needles used for trans-septal puncture, was instrumental in setting up the system for re-sterilising pacemakers and found some way to fix most items of equipment if they broke down.

He was an enthusiastic and accomplished author, published several textbooks on cardiac clinical technology and was particularly proud of his monograph documenting the history of the Cardiac Clinic at Groote Schuur Hospital. It is indeed a history that awakens pride. Bill Piller was an integral and essential part of the establishment of a tradition of excellence in this institution and in the country.

Bill was unfailingly courteous, pleasant and kind. Patients loved him and he treated them all with kindness, dignity and respect. Our enduring memory of Bill will be that of him with a screwdriver in the top pocket of the white coat, volt-meter close at hand, tube of epoxy and a cheerful smile as he tried (usually successfully) to fix some item of equipment. Behind the smile was a man of vision, commitment and ambition and he achieved many of his aspirations from which we all benefit.

Beyond work he was a devoted family man, a gifted musician and long-serving member of the United Service Lodge No. 3285 EC where his musical talents were greatly appreciated.

His was a life well lived in the service of others. His success in establishing his specialty and profession made a major contribution to the well-being of countless patients, students and several generations of cardiologists in South Africa during his life and will continue for many years.

That is a legacy to which few can lay claim.

Patrick Commerford
Bernard Gersh

Pauline de la Motte Hall **(15/01/1935 – 27/06/2007)**



Pauline Hall graduated MB BS from the University of Melbourne in 1959. At the time she was 6 months pregnant with her first son Michael. After taking time out to raise her children Michael, Elisa and Ross, Pauline and her husband Rod moved to Adelaide where he became a surgical registrar and Pauline

a RMO at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. In 1967 Pauline started her postgraduate training as a pathology registrar at the same hospital. She was awarded a Fellowship of the Royal Australasia College of Pathologists in 1973 and was appointed as consultant pathologist at the newly opened Flinders Medical

Centre in 1976. She remained at Flinders until 1998, rising through the ranks to become a full Professor in 1997.

Pauline's contact with South Africa dated back to the late 70s when she met three of us (SJS, JT and REK) at various international meetings. In the 1980s one of us (REK) was invited to write a chapter in her book *Alcoholic Liver Disease* published in 1985. There followed a 3-month visiting professorship at UCT at the invitation of JT in 1996 - 1997, and in July 1998 Pauline was appointed Professor of Anatomical Pathology at UCT. She held this post until her return to Australia in March 2005. In 2000 the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa awarded her an FCM Anatomical Pathology by peer review. Pauline was appointed Honorary Professor at UCT prior to her departure for Brisbane where at age 70 she was appointed as Professor of Pathology at both the University of Queensland and Griffith University. She was also appointed as an Honorary Principal Research Fellow at the Queensland Institute of Medical Research.

Pauline was an outstanding pathologist. Her interest in liver disease is reflected in her 177 publications. She edited 3 books, contributed 24 chapters in books and published 150 papers in peer-reviewed journals. This alone placed her in the forefront of liver pathologists, but Pauline's greatest strength was as a teacher and mentor of young medical scientists, hepatologists and pathologists. During her 7 years in Cape Town she supervised 5 PhD, 1 MSc and 9 MMed students. In addition she was co-supervisor for another 6 MMed students.

Pauline injected new life into the liver component of SAGES and founded a national liver interest group which meets at least twice a year and which now bears her name.

Back in Australia Pauline maintained her work in liver disease and as always became deeply involved in the training of young pathologists. The Anatomical Pathology Registrars recognised this and nominated her to receive the inaugural Teaching Award from the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia. This was presented to her in Brisbane by the College President earlier this year.

Soon after her return to Australia Pauline suffered a recurrence of a malignant melanoma which was removed in 1970. Despite increasing ill-health she continued to work and was involved in planning an advanced pathology training course less than a week before her death. Indeed, before her death Pauline established scholarship funds that would be available in perpetuity both in Australia and in Cape Town.

Pauline's life was not always easy. Her father died when she was relatively young, she had to train as a pathologist and start her career while raising a young family and she had to overcome significant discrimination based on her gender – all of which were dwarfed by the tragic loss of her son Michael. Pauline emerged from all of these a stronger person. Her energy, enthusiasm for work and for life in general was boundless. She never ran out of questions to ask or dogma to



challenge and she was never too tired to enjoy a party. She was a loyal friend and a superb role model.

We will miss a dear friend and much admired colleague who truly enriched the lives of those she touched. Our sympathy goes to Pauline's children Ross and Elisa, their partners and to her sister Claudia and family.

Ralph Kirsch
John Terblanche
Stuart Saunders
David Dent
JP van Niekerk
Adrian Brown
Wendy Spearman
Henry Hairwadzi
Mark Sonderup

Sid Kiel (18/ 07/1916 – 19/07/2007)

The South African who boycotted Hitler's Games

Sid Kiel was born in Vrede in the then Orange Free State on 18 July 1916. When he was 7 years old his father died, and his mother, his sister Diana, and he located to Cape Town to reside with his uncle Morrie. His school career at SACS was illustrious, becoming head boy twice before matriculating in 1935, captaining the 1st cricket and athletic teams, and being vice-captain of the 1st rugby team. At the age of 16, while still at school, he became a Springbok athlete, and in 1935 came within 0.5 seconds of the world record for the 120 yards hurdles, ensuring his selection for the forthcoming Olympic Games to be held in Germany in 1936. Hitler and the Third Reich were in power, and being Jewish Sid sacrificed his selection on principle. However, he represented South Africa at the Empire Games in Sydney in 1938. At cricket he opened the batting for Western Province but was surprisingly omitted from the South African cricket team captained by Jack Cheetham, which would have earned him double Springbok colours.

On graduating MB ChB from UCT Medical School Sid joined the South African Medical Corps in the North African and Italian campaigns. He returned to South Africa and did his internship at the New Somerset Hospital. In 1949 he married Jean Kramer, and with two children, Sue and Barnett, settled in Sea Point where he started his career as a family doctor. It flourished and earned him a reputation as 'the beloved physician' and esteemed colleague.

Sid and I formed a partnership in 1963, a warm handshake and a couple of Scotches sealing a future relationship of trust

and enduring friendship. In the practice of medicine what we achieved, what sustained us, and what was so precious to Sid, was the warm and trusting relationship between doctor and patient and between society and the medical profession. We were spared the crude intrusion into our cherished profession by government, big business and bureaucracy – depriving us of our autonomy as doctors and of our committed role of caring for our patients' medical problems and of caring for them as human beings.

In 1976 Saville Furman joined the practice, and when he located to Milnerton in 1981 Graham Chivers became a partner. In March 1997 our practice amalgamated with that of Bernard Grevler, and shortly thereafter Leon Geffen joined the enlarged practice.

Sid's health deteriorated and he gradually extricated himself from full-time practice. Previous spinal surgery had caused progressive weakness in his legs, but he remained socially active and involved with the affairs of his old school SACS. He became chair- and wheel-chair bound.

In 2002 Sid Kiel was awarded the *Spectemur Agendo* Award by SACS for 'outstanding achievements as sportsman and medical practitioner, but above all as an exceptional human being ... a leader of boys and men in peace and war, a servant of the community during a life-time's medical practice, and always a most gentle and uplifting of men – a legend for his modesty, talent and courage'.

On 21 June 2007 Sid was hospitalised for a myocardial infarct, thereafter remaining bed-bound. We would openly discuss the vicissitudes of life and our mortality. It is a testament to his inner strength and peace of mind that he could comfortably discuss these issues with his family. This should be of enduring comfort to his wife Jean, his daughter Sue, and son Barnett.

Sid Kiel died on 19 July 2007 – his 91st birthday – a birthday he shared with Nelson Mandela. I have often thought how similar these two individuals are – both imposing, dignified and charismatic, sharing an intense core of humanity, humility and integrity, and beloved by all.

During a moving memorial service at SACS the school choir chanted the last verse of our mourner's *kadish* memorial prayer exalting the Almighty in Hebrew. The words mean, 'He who makes peace in his high places, may he make peace for us all'. All those who loved and cherished Sid Kiel will know that the Almighty has made peace for him in his high places.

Maurice Silbert