



## William C. Hickey, MD

### IN MEMORIAM

**1914 - 2001**



"YOUR ABILITY TO CALMLY AND QUIETLY evaluate all matters requiring Board and Society action established a precedent which I sincerely trust can be maintained." These are the words of Joel T. Janvier, MD, the incoming president of our Society in 1962 in a letter to his predecessor, William C. Hickey, MD.

William Fong, MD, remembers Dr. Bill Hickey as "always very pleasant to work with." Besides being a skilled surgeon, I recall him as calm, quiet, steadfast and always a perfect gentleman.

Bill was born in Lawrence, MA, and received his medical degree at Tufts Medical School, Boston, in December 1943. After serving in the US Army during World War II in the Philippines and Okinawa, Bill practiced family medicine in Sacramento from 1947-1952. During this time, he became good friends with the Anderson brothers of Anderson Pharmacy and delivered several of the Anderson children.

In July 1952, Bill fulfilled a longtime dream by entering a neurosurgery residency program at Baylor University in Houston. He then returned to Sacramento as its third fully-trained neurosurgeon and practiced neurosurgery here from December 1955 to January 1973. He worked in various consulting and administrative positions until retiring in July 1980.

During his career, Bill was first in a number of situations. He won the first scholarship to medical school from the medical society in Lawrence, MA. And he was the first physician to serve on the Board of Directors of Mercy General Hospital in Sacramento; prior to that, the Board consisted of five nuns. Bill was earlier the president of the medical staff at Mercy General.

Bill's sister, Grace Evans of Monroe Township, New Jersey, said Bill decided to become a physician in high school. His high school chemistry teacher said he would never make it to medical school, but Bill was determined. After receiving his medical school diploma, he returned to the high school and presented it to his old chemistry teacher.

In his late years, Bill developed a progressive dementia that precluded most conversations. But when asked medical questions, his attention brightened and he could sometimes come up with a surprisingly accurate answer. Bill's last four and a half years were spent in a nursing home in Piscataway, NJ, where he could be comfortably cared for, and Grace said he just "faded away."

The last of the Anderson children delivered by Bill, Patricia, lived in New Jersey and visited him occasionally along with her 2-year-old son. In June of this year, Walter and Agnes Anderson made a donation to the Mercy Hospital Foundation in Bill Hickey's name.

Bill's wife, Anne (Bowen) Hickey, died in 1981. Bill is survived by his sister, Grace, a daughter, Nancy Walker of Colorado Springs, Colorado, two grandchildren, five great-grandsons and several nieces and nephews.

- by Bryant N. Sheehy, MD

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