



## **William F.B. Harding, MD**

**IN MEMORIAM**

**1910–2003**



HE CALLED ME "HALLEY'S COMET."

It was the summer of 1973, and I had moved my family across country to join Dr. William Harding's solo practice at the Professional Building at 5301 F Street. No sooner had we begun our association than another dermatologist in the same building abruptly retired, leaving us a substantial new patient caseload.

Bill was trying to slow down, and I earned his nickname by sheer hustle, trying to cushion him from extra work. We had a great time. I loved watching him care for patients with his quiet, gentility — definitely a new experience for me — which influenced my career significantly.

Notwithstanding the dermatologic axiom that you "never let the history get in the way," Bill would listen intently to each patient's story and was often able to make a diagnosis before he ever examined the patient. He would explain his impression and treatment options carefully, not leaving the room until all questions were answered.

Eschewing preprinted brochures and print outs, he preferred the personal touch. Even his business acumen was refreshingly down-to-earth. "At some level," he would opine with a wry grin and a twinkle in his eye, "making a profit comes down to taking in more than you spend." He was a wonderful mentor.

Dr. William Harding died in his sleep of complications of dementia on December 28, 2003.

He was a Hoosier, born in Indianapolis in 1910. He moved west with his family to Sacramento at a young age, graduated from Sacramento High in 1928, received an AB from USC in 1931, and his MD from Stanford as an AOA in 1935. His internship year was spent at Cincinnati General Hospital where he met and married his wife, Florence, beginning a relationship that was to last over 60 years.

Returning to Sacramento, Bill spent two years in internal medicine at Sutter General Hospital before opening a general practice in downtown Sacramento in 1938.

During the war, he spent two years in Britain with the 8th Army Air Corp as a flight surgeon, where for some reason he developed an interest in skin disease. He returned to the States and served a dermatology residency at UC San Francisco. In 1949, he became the first board-certified dermatologist in Sacramento, where he maintained a private practice until retiring in 1986.

Bill will be remembered for his active participation and contribution to the Sacramento County Medical Society, serving on numerous committees as well as the position of President in 1959.

During his presidency, the present SSVMS office building on Elvas Avenue was conceived, designed, authorized, and financed. Bill was also a founding director of the

Sacramento Medical Care Foundation.

His beloved wife, Flo, two years predeceased him. He is survived by three children, three grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

He was an avid lifelong golfer, a jazz and classical music aficionado, and an ardent audiophile who marveled during his lifetime at the improvements in recorded sound reproduction. Of course, he also always had the latest Hi-Fi stereo equipment.

Bill Harding was elegant, graceful, and dignified — the quintessential gentleman — and will be missed greatly by friends and colleagues.

— *Lawrence Bass, MD*

Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society  
5380 Elvas Avenue #100 • Sacramento, CA 95819  
916.452.2671 PH • 916.452.2690 FX • Email: info@ssvms.org

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