



Dr. William A. Burke

March 11, 2011

Dr. "Bill" Burke, 76, of Skaneateles passed Friday at home. Born in Syracuse he was a graduate of Nottingham High School, where he excelled both as a student and three-letter athlete. Following high school, he attended Dartmouth College as a pre-med major. His time at Dartmouth also included participation with the freshman basketball team, Zeta Psi fraternity, and Glee Club.

Following graduation from medical school at Upstate, Bill was selected for a highly sought-after internship and surgery residency at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri. After completing his residency, he received a commission in the United States Army and, shortly after, served as a surgeon in a field hospital in Vietnam. Following his discharge as a Major, Bill joined the local medical office of Dr. Bugden, later becoming the office of Ikins and Burke. Dr. Burke practiced medicine in local area hospitals for well over 30 years, specializing in thoracic surgery. His interests included golf, reading and gardening. As a golfer, Bill won several tournaments, including a club championship. He will best be remembered for his loving personality, unforgettable charm, magnificent sense of humor and incomparable devotion to his craft. His love for, and talent in, the field of medicine drove him to continue caring for others and teaching his successors long after he stopped receiving compensation for his services. He is survived by his wife, Katherine, children Bill, Ann, and John, and nine grandchildren. There will be a memorial service to be held at a later date. Arrangements by B.L. Bush & Sons Funeral Home, Camillus. Contributions in lieu of flowers may be made to the USO,

P.O. Box 96322, Washington, DC, 20090-6322 or online at USO.org Those who wish to express their condolences please click on the link at the top of the page just below his name marked "Post a Message of Sympathy"

Tribute Wall

TS

“ Dear Kathy, I worked with your husband, Bill for 20 years at St. Joseph's Hospital and enjoyed having him as a mentor and a friend. He was always a joy to be around whether doing hospital rounds, working in the operating room, or at a social function. Dr. Burke will always be remembered for his easy going manner, sense of humor and his robust voice that let you know he was there before even seeing him. I've missed working with him and know that he will be greatly missed by many. Sincerely, Thom Sandford

thom sandford - May 06, 2011 at 12:00 AM

KS

“ My heartfelt condolences to Mrs. Burke and the family. Dr. Burke was one truly one of the finest people, and we enjoyed every moment he spent with us at The Krebs. He was a man to look up to, with his welcoming demeanor and wonderful sense of humor, as well as a highly respected Doctor and person. He will surely be missed. On behalf of the Loveless Family, our sincerest condolences. Kim Loveless Seabury

Kim Seabury - April 03, 2011 at 12:00 AM

MP

“ I join you in mourning the loss of Dr. Burke. I thoroughly enjoyed working with him at St Joe's. I will remember him for his willingness to be called at any time with questions or problems and his recurring words of advice - "If a woman answers, hang up!".

Mary Ditzer, PA - March 23, 2011 at 12:00 AM

GB

“ To the family of Dr. Burke . You have my heart felt sympathy for the loss of a husband , father , grandfather and the finest person of his profession to all of us who were fortunate to have had his healing hands placed on us . When I entered the hospital with pnemonia it had gone into a plural infusion with a empiea , not good . to say I was sick would be an understatment . I had no idea of how bad until Dr. Burk explained and that I had better cancel our up comming trip to Flordia as I would be spending the next six weeks recovering from the surgery that not only saved my lung , but my life . I am forever indebeted to him and sorrowed by his passing . May he rest in peace . Gary R. Burkard

Gary R. Burkard - March 19, 2011 at 12:00 AM

CM

“ Kathy, We are fortunate to have known both you and Bill, and mourn his loss. We'll remember him as a gentle and caring man who was always good company. Please let us know about the memorial service. Cathleen &Bob

Cathleen and Bob McColgin - March 19, 2011 at 12:00 AM

KL

“ To Dr. Burke's Family -- I met Dr. Burke in 1995 when I was a patient @ St.Joe's..I had been under the care of another doctor for almost 4-weeks, 4 wks. in the hospital was just AWFUL, and still my lung problem had not been resolved. My sister is a nurse and 'found' Dr. Burke he came to my room to speak to me. He said that he'd seen my name @ the nurses desk for weeks he would wonder why I had been hospitalized for so long; I had a spontaneous-pneumo thorax, better known as a collapsed lung. My Dr. at the time had been relying on chest tubes to fix my lung, but they didn't 'work' for me after almost 4-weeks in the hospital, I was terrified I'd never get out alive---Dr. Burke introduced himself to me told me something like "I'll operate on you, you'll be home in 3-days" (!!) I just KNEW that he knew what he was talking about, and I 'fired' my doctor and 'hired' Dr. Burke as my doctor. My surgery was a complete success, and his promise of having me home in 3-days came true!! I had many office visits w/him for a little while, and I have to say, I absolutely LOOKED FORWARD to my appointments...How many people can say that they LOOK FORWARD to going to the doctor?? Well...anyone who had Dr.Burke for their doctor can!! He was SO funny and NiCE! Fast forward to 2006: My other lung had the same issue happen, and after weeks AND WEEKS of going to my primary care physician to find out if it was truly the same thing as my other lung problems in 1995...I was continually told that the XRay "looked fine", and was given some 'anxiety / depression' pills...I KNEW he was wrong, because the pain was incredible! BUT, he HAD TO be right, afterall, he WAS a doctor, right?....WRONG! After 72-days of horrible pain, FINALLY, another XRay showed a partial lung-collapse..I called Dr.Burke, he was given my XRay information, and he told me "You know what we have to do, right?"...not gonna lie, I was crying like a baby..but I KNEW he was right, once again! 2-days later, Dr.Burke operated on me, and within 10-days, I was home again !! Dr.Burke SAVED MY LIFE 2-times, no doubt about it. He'd come to visit me in my hospital room tell me his opinion/diagnosis etc., I looked forward to his visits, his BRIGHT smile twinkling blue eyes, he always made me laugh...I saw him one last time in his office up @

Community-Gen'l Hospital a few weeks later: He told me that my lung Xrays FINALLY showed a full recovery, and said, "Now get out of here go enjoy your life!".. His personality sense of humor were awesome..I really 'loved' him, and when I left that day, I said to him "I love ya, thanks again, BUT...I hope I never see you again", We both laughed, and he said "You're breaking-up with me??", and I said "Yes, this is the last time I'll (hopefully) ever have to see you again!", I actually gave him a big hug, and thanked him again told him how happy I was to have met him in 1995, and how LUCKY I was that he was still practicing medicine/thoracic surgery 11-yrs. later! Its been 5-ish yrs. now, and thanks to Dr.Burke, I am doing well. I was SO SAD to see his picture in the Sunday paper, tears came to my eyes---How sad that 'my' BRILLIANT doctor had passed away..What a HuGE loss to the community, to his family, to those of us that were his patients. His stature, his deep voice, his funny wit, his medical knowledge will all be missed. I hope I will find out when his memorial services will be help, because I'd like to attend..My sympathies go out to his family, and my thoughts prayers also. He was, simply...AWESOME. I will never forget him.

KAREN LAMBERT - March 16, 2011 at 12:00 AM

MM

“*Bill, Ann & John, I am so sorry to hear about your father. He made a huge impression on those of us who grew up on Robineau Rd in the 70's -- tall, DEEP voice, warm smile and great sense of humor. I also remember hearing about his dramatic victory at the '74 Bellevue Member-Guest (ok, I'm guessing on the year.) I hope you are all well otherwise. Please know that we are thinking of you and your family and that your father is very fondly remembered.*

Mike McCarthy - March 15, 2011 at 12:00 AM

RT

“ Dr. Burke, May God bless you and your family for all the good that you did for people all over. You were a man of greatness, and spoke with truth and authority. So very glad to have met you about 6 years ago. Thank you.

Richard A. Terpening - March 15, 2011 at 12:00 AM

MS

“ After suffering a pulmonary embolism almost 40 years ago I have Dr. Burke and Ikins to thank for me being here today. I have 2 daughters and a grandson. My grandson has cystic fibrosis. Sure wish Dr's Burke and Ikins were here today for him!!!

Michael Sitnik - March 15, 2011 at 12:00 AM

KF

“ dr burke was an up front tell it like it is guy. we enjoyed him at dialysis. i work in hemodialysis on james st. i am the secretary. we were all sad when he transferred out. him and i had a running joke. he weighed himself on the way out and he would yell: if anybody cares. i would write his weight down for his nurse because she was busy and i would tell him: nobody cares.....and we had a laugh. please accept my sympathy and prayers. karen field

karen field - March 14, 2011 at 12:00 AM

DC

“ Kathy, Ed and I are so sorry to hear of Bills passing. Our prayers and thoughts are with you and the family.

Diane and Ed Clark - March 14, 2011 at 12:00 AM

SO

“ I am so sorry to hear of his passing. He was a great doctor and teacher. He had a quick wit and also a funny joke to make you blush. He will be missed by many.

Shanna O'Connor - March 14, 2011 at 12:00 AM

LK

“ When I arrived in Syracuse in 1983 to learn to be a thoracic surgeon, Bill became an integral part of my education. From him I learned to remain calm in the face of adversity, to relax and enjoy the work, and that there is always a brighter side. I remember many Saturday mornings when he was eager to get to the golf course, that he would nonetheless participate in Thoracic Grand Rounds at Upstate. He had a great knowledge of the history of thoracic surgery and added a unique perspective on the problems presented, adding immeasurably to the discussion. In later years, whenever we crossed paths, he always greeted me in a warm and lighthearted manner, which I will miss.

Leslie Kohman - March 14, 2011 at 12:00 AM

DM

“ Dear Kathy and family, I was very sorry to hear of Bill's passing away. We were medical school classmates and we both spent our careers working in Syracuse. Our paths crossed frequently not only when giving medical care but also most delightful were our frequent lunches and OR lounge coffee breaks. The conversations and humor were most enjoyable. He had a great ability for good conversation and humor. Besides all this he was a great surgeon and doctor. He will be missed very much. With much sympathy, Daniel L. Dombroski, MD

Daniel Dombroski, MD - March 14, 2011 at 12:00 AM

JK

“ I would like to express my deepest sympathies on the passing of Dr. Burke. I got to know him by working with him at CGH. He always had a joke to tell -- many of them made those that listened blush or just walk away shaking their heads in amazement at the punch line. He always cared for his patients and made them feel at ease but most of all he talked of his family and of his golden retrievers. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Judy Kress - March 14, 2011 at 12:00 AM

JB

“ To Dr. Burke's family: I worked with Dr. Burke as a surgical resident and later as an attending surgeon. I am sorry for your loss. He was a truly passionate man and obviously loved life. In the operating room, he was fearless and steady working around the great vessels of the heart and lungs. I can imagine what an incredible asset he must have been as a field surgeon in Vietnam. I enjoyed hearing the stories of the B & B in the OR lounge with his deep baritone voice and laughter. He will be missed.

Jacqueline Bays - March 14, 2011 at 12:00 AM

BM

“ Dear Kathy, I don't know if you remember me, but Jamie Mathews introduced me to both you and Bill many years ago. I was so sorry to hear of Bill's passing when Jamie told me. Please accept my deepest sympathy for both you and your beautiful family. I know how deeply he will be missed. Sincerely, Barbara

Barbara McGrath - March 14, 2011 at 12:00 AM

NZ

“ KATHY,our deepest sympathy for you and your families loss.May GOD GRANT YOU STRENGTH AND PEACE DURING THIS DIFFICULT TIME. LOVE,NICK& ANN

nick & ann zervas - March 14, 2011 at 12:00 AM

JB

“ Kathy - Jan and I were saddened when Dougie made us aware that Billy passed away at home on Friday. Please accept our deepest sympathy in your loss of Billy. Your family and you are in our prayers. Jan

Jan & Jim Bean - March 14, 2011 at 12:00 AM

SF

“ Kath, I am so sorry to hear of your loss. I spoke with Kieth last night to let him know that Bill had passed away. He was going to let the Austin Clan all now. I enjoyed working with Bill many times in the halls of CGH. I will never forget his wonderful charm and his deep beautiful voice. He was a pleasure to work with and a wonderful man. I am so glad that you had him in your life! Please let me know if I can do anything for you and your family anytime. Much love to you all. Sue Zwack-Felter (the other Austin Family Member)

Susan Felter - March 14, 2011 at 12:00 AM

DP

“ Kathy: Heard the news yesterday from Zeke.I was so sure that Bill mwas on the right path to recovery when I saw you both last week. My entire family mourns your loss. Bill was truly one of my best friends and I will cherish the many great times we had together. Please let me know when you will have the memorial service. Dougie

Doug Pinckney - March 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM

PM

“ Sorry to hear of Bills passing. Great memories, great times, great guy.

Phil Markert - March 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM

DL

“ So sorry to read about Doc passing.He was truly a fine gentleman with a great sense of humor.I spent many hours with him on the golf course and was glad I got to know him.He will be missed by all that knew him.

don lemp - March 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM

JM

“ Kathy - I am so sorry to learn about Bill. I will always remember the golf outings we enjoyed and the side splitting jokes and stories we shared. I will be in touch with Dougie regarding the memorial service. Take care and be well. Jamie Mathews

Jamie Mathews - March 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM

RM

“ Kathy, I'm so sorry to hear about Bill, he was a great friend and was always there for me whenever I had an ailment. His sense of humor and great singing voice will be remembered always. He was truly one of a kind and we'll miss him. If I can do anything, please don't hesitate to call Rich & Mary Beth Matthews

Rich & Mary Beth Matthews - March 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM

BB

“ I am very sad to read in today's paper about the passing of Dr. Burke. Billy became a fast friend of mine the summer of 1988 when I sublet Zeke Spaulding's house out by the Skaneateles C.C. We managed to keep in touch periodically over the years even though I lived in the Washington, D.C. area. He was truly a most wonderful and warm-hearted man whose blue eyes always seemed to sparkle when his marvelous sense of humor would grace a moment. Which was very often, thank God. He will be truly missed and my heart goes out to his wife and family. I would like to know when the memorial service is planned so that I may attend it. Thank you.

Benjamin Banta - March 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM

RZ

“ I am saddened to hear of the passing of a mentor and fellow Big Greener. Billy kept me enlightened and entertained every time we spoke. I have learned much from him over the years. He helped so many people with his skill and expertise. We will miss him immensely and the medical community has much to thank him for.

Rick Zogby - March 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM

MG

“ To the family of Dr. William Burke I realize you do not know me I met Dr. Burke May 3, 1979. It was my 8th birthday and my 50th dr appt with a specialist no one could tell my mom what was wrong with me except my chest had a problem. I was a twin and Dr Burke was the only dr. that found the problem of what was wrong. And he fixed my chest it took 3 years and two surgeries but i was able to live a normal healthy life If he had not discovered my problem I most likely would have died. I was a scared little girl who did not understand but Dr. Burke took time to explain every thing so I would understand it. His patience and love he gave me I never forgot. I admired him my whole life and talk of him when ever my scars become a subject. I am now headed to age forty I have five children (a set of triplets). I just wanted to let you know how grateful I am to your husband father ext. Even though our visits were short and I was so young Dr Burke always made me feel like i was an important person and my opinion mattered. I am so grateful for the imprint in my life and it saddens me to know that he has left this world. Your family will be in my prayers

Mary Garfield - March 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM

PM

“ Sorry to hear of Bill's passing. Great times, great memories, great guy.

Phil Markert - March 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM

DL

“ Bill Burke was my colleague, fellow alumnus of Nottingham and Upstate, and a wise and skillful man. He could throw foul shots with Dolph Schayes! I shall miss his smile, his concern for me, and his gentle manner. May peace be with the entire Burke family.
Respectfully, Len Levy

Dr. Leonard Levy - March 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM

BS

“*Doc, Quantity versus quality! I haven't known you very long, but I feel we became close during the past year as we spent a lot of time alone traveling back and forth to your appointments. You are such a truly sincere and caring person and always full of knowledge on so many subjects. You never failed to ask about the well being of my wife and I and family. What a wonderful feeling to have known you and the trust we built up by being able to talk about all subjects and know it was between you and I and there it will stay. I'll miss you Doc and the pain of losing you will slowly fade, but the great memories will last forever. Our most sincere sympathy to you Kathy and family. Let us know if we can be of any help. Much love, Aunt Barbara & Uncle Ron*

Barbara & Ron Smith - March 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM

JR

“ Hello, you don't know me, but Dr. Burke saved my life at 40 yrs. old; I never smoked and do not drink, but pneumonia had set in from fall through the next summer and would never leave me and was constantly spitting up blood. My regular physician sent me to a thoracic surgeon and here was this tall guy dressed to the "nines", I thought I was going to a fashion show; he was dressed so coordinated. My folks and myself went to meet him, thinking I was in the wrong office. He preceeded to tell me, that the x-ray showed that there was "cancer" in my lung. I almost passed out, but he said, "Joyce, that is what the radiologist said, you look too healty to be that sick, so I'm going to open you up". Turned out to be a "lung abscess" and my right lower lobe had to be removed with a second chance to live. My life changed drastically from then on and had to accept life differently, especially in the colder climate here in Syracuse, NY. I will never forget this guy and for what he did for me; I have a wonderful husband, Ed, who takes very good care of me, and with a 17 percent loss of my lung, he does a lot of things around the house, that I can't do anymore. When I read the newspaper this morning and saw Dr. William A. Burke, deceased, it brought tears to my eyes, but what a guy, his wit and great sense of humor always kept me laughing. I just wanted you all to know what an experience I encountered with this great guy that you called Husband, Dad and Grandfather. My condolences to all of you and my prayers are with you at this time.

Joyce (Chase) Roberts - March 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM

FW

“ I remember well the long years at Crouse-Irving Memorial hospital when I worked on the thoracic surgery unit with Dr. Burke and Dr. Ikins. They were both highly competent, polished, and professional in their care of their patients. Dr. Burke was always the more glamorous of the two, tall, good looking and impeccably dressed, and many of the women swooned over him when he arrived on the floor to see patients. He was always a gentleman, polite, professional, and considerate with nurses, patients and their families. He was a mentor to many physicians, and a life saver to many patients throughout the years. God bless him for all he gave to everyone in his too short lifetime. He will be missed.

Frances Walts.R.N. - March 13, 2011 at 12:00 AM

PR

“ I'm so sorry for your loss. I know that upon entering the Pearly Gates - in true Bill fashion - his first words to Gabriel were, "I've arrived!." Bill made a lasting impression on me. His genuine warmth, that booming voice, and his repertoire of stories and jokes will stay with me forever. Good bye, Bill. I look forward to hearing your new material on the other side. Rest in peace. Love, Paul

Paul Ramirez - March 12, 2011 at 12:00 AM