

## **Tribute to William “Bill” Brinker, M.D. (1929-2017)**

Bill Brinker was the kind of person we all want to be. At his memorial service, Pastor Amy likened him to a tree...with a large branches, sheltering those around it. Bill was more like a forrest; where one goes to seek a safe place to be; to provide shelter; a place to be one with nature. Bill was like a father to many.

The things I remember most about Bill are his humor and his altruism. His dry humor must have been passed down to his children because as I went through the receiving line, I told one of his sons that he looked so much like his father. The son said, “So I’m told...Dad was a very handsome man.”

In my mind, Bill's major attribute was his altruistic attitude toward life and everyone with whom he met. One quick example. As a behavioral science faculty member at the Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine (Now North East Ohio Medical University), I called Bill to ask a favor. I knew that Bill had gone on Outward Bound Adventures in other countries, and thought that he might lead a Mini-Outward Bound adventure with some of our students. The idea was for Bill to lead a strenuous hike through the mountains (hills) of southern Ohio and during several campouts on the weekend adventure, around a camp fire, to talk about his career, his love of medicine, the trials of being a physician... an opportunity for medical students to get to know Bill...this wonderful role model. Bill said he would think about it. The next morning he returned my call and said he had a counter offer. Bill suggested that he take four or five medical students with him on one of his Eye Missions to Central America. Yes, he would met with them each evening and talk about the important lessons of medicine. And to cement the deal, Bill said he would pay for the students’ transportation and lodging. Bill did this for a number of years and each of those medical students returned to Ohio a different person. Just one more example of how Bill changed the lives of people he encountered.

Bill will live on in the hearts of those he encountered...what better way could anyone live a life?