



William Flavel Wright

May 9, 1942 - March 2, 2021

Bill passed away peacefully at his home in Rancho Santa Fe, California surrounded by his family after a two-and-a-half-year battle with cancer that he fought with courage and dignity. He was 78.

Bill was a devoted husband, father, friend and mentor to many. He is survived by his beloved wife Sally Ellingsen Wright and his five children: Matthew, Mark, Wendy, her husband Dean Kent, Carson, and Preston; and grandchildren, Thomas, Madeline, Catherine, Patrick, Meredith, Ella, Rory, Hayden, Hudson and Ava, all of whom he adored.

Bill was born and raised in Lincoln, Nebraska. He was the son of Flavel and Marian Wright. When Bill was three years old, at the climax of World War II, his father's Navy aircraft carrier, the USS Bunker Hill was attacked and nearly sunk by 2 Japanese kamikazes. This was an event that impacted Bill throughout his life. Thankfully his father returned safely and Bill and his sister Lynn, were later blessed with two younger siblings, Gregg and Scott.

Bill attended Lincoln Southeast High School where he was a popular student, prom king, tall and athletic. Bill was a record holding swimmer, good golfer, and a formidable football player (until a knee injury prematurely ended his playing days). He was a handsome kid who was a friend to all. After high school, Bill passed up the opportunity to attend Princeton and chose to stay close to his home and family, attending the University of Nebraska. At UNL, Bill was a member of Phi Kappa Psi and certainly enjoyed all that goes with fraternity life. His parents were upset to learn he owned a former milk truck that was known as the "party on wheels".

Bill married his first wife, Susie Cole, in 1965 and left for North Carolina to attend Duke University Law school. Bill received his CPA at the age of 25. While a law student, Bill taught managerial accounting at Duke to the Business School students, using the Wall Street Journal as his textbook. After graduating law school and becoming the third-generation lawyer in his family, he and Susie moved back to Lincoln where Bill worked for his Dad's law firm Cline Williams, Wright, Johnson and Oldfather. With bigger aspirations, Bill founded his own firm at the age of 27 that became Wright, Rembolt, Milligan and Berger. He grew a dreadful mustache just to make himself look older as people thought he was too young to have such a robust law firm. After 14 years of practice, the entrepreneurial drive in him took over and he left the practice of law to start buying and building his own companies. He started with AMCON Distributing, a company that distributed beer and convenience store goods. Bill built AMCON into a successful publicly traded (NYSE) company. He spun off the beer distributor, Premier Midwest Beverage, which is now owned by the Bunker Hill Group which he also founded.

Bill was able to travel the world by way of his business partnership with his lifelong friend, Allen Petersen. Together they took a small company based on Allen's grandfather's invention (the Vise Grip) and grew it into a large international corporation, American Tool Company. Bill also worked building Gold Banc Corp. Inc. in Kansas City and was a founder of The Cayman Water Company based in the Cayman Islands, where Bill was a frequent visitor. Bill also served as personal counsel to the governor of Nebraska, Bob Kerrey.

Bill's passion was entrepreneurship. He was happiest in the midst of a business deal and he was the best at finding creative ways to put the complicated transactions together. He was avid about completing the New York Times Crossword puzzle daily. He was a voracious reader. Bill was very proud of his personal library filled with thousands of beautiful leather-bound classic books, most of which he had read. He loved collecting posters from the Belle Epoque era. He had an endless knowledge of history. Bill had a love of France and spent many months in Paris, even though his French was questionable. Bill was an early riser and enjoyed his morning coffee at Starbucks with friends. He enjoyed the company of his personal trainer more than the workout itself. One of his favorite rituals was making Sunday morning pancakes or waffles for his family. He was the creator of Billy's Goop, a top-secret, family favorite ice cream sauce.

Bill was also was a bit quirky and for some reason, unsure of himself at times. He had a quivery voice when he was a little nervous that we all teased him about, and we will miss dearly. Bill loved being a father again later in life. He was there every morning when the kids went to school and in the kitchen every afternoon eagerly waiting their return home. Bill also loved a Crown Royal, a fire in the fireplace, a nice dinner and some melancholic music. More than anything, Bill loved spending time with his family at home.

A private memorial gathering will be held by the family in April. In lieu of flowers the family requests a memorial contribution be made to the Flavel A. Wright Endowment, founded by Bill, to promote the education of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights to elementary, middle school and high school students. Please find the donation address below or visit the Nebraska State Bar Foundation online.

<https://www.nebarfnd.org/endowments/flavel-wright-fund>