

Dr. William James Craymer

Retired local doctor, William (Bill) Craymer died last Saturday, June 5, in Bracebridge at the age of 70, after a 3 year battle with cancer.

Bill was born on August 15, 1928, in the city of Montreal, the only child of the Venerable Samuel and Eleanor Craymer. When his family moved to Bala he attended Gravenhurst High School and worked summers at Dunn's Pavilion, the popular Bala dance hall during the "big band" era. It was during this time that he developed his love for Muskoka.

After high school, Bill returned to Montreal to attend McGill University. He obtained his B.Sc. in 1950, graduating with "great distinction." After declining a teaching position at Queen's University, Bill entered medical school at McGill. He graduated in 1954 and completed his internship at Toronto Western Hospital.

On February 22, 1955, he married Elizabeth Norman, a registered nurse from Wellesley Hospital in Toronto. Accompanied by his wife, he started his medical career as a young doctor in Bella Bella, a remote native island community off the coast of British Columbia. He had many stories of the difficulties of working with few modern medical facilities. Often unable to transport patients to better equipped hospitals on the mainland, he quickly learned many difficult medical and surgical procedures. After returning to Ontario, Bill began working in the public health department of the City of Etobicoke. He later entered general practice and industrial medicine in Welland, Ontario.

Bill and his family returned to Muskoka in 1958 when he joined the Greig Medical Group in Bracebridge. He also served as District Coroner for a number of years. Bill especially enjoyed medical research. He and his colleague, Dr. Harry Bain of Toronto, were the first in North America to discover an abnormal aging condition in children. Although it was very demanding, he enjoyed his work and found it immensely rewarding. Many local people still remember him as the doctor that brought them into the world.



After more than 15 years with the Greig Medical Group, Bill's love of medical research led him to the Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia. During this time he collaborated with the medical schools at the University of Toronto and the University of Western Ontario. He was also published in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine. Bill retired from the Huronia Regional Centre in August 1993. However, he still kept busy with part time work, both at HRC and with Dr. Stokes in Bracebridge until 1996.

Bill had a great passion for books, especially those on history and science. He assembled an enviable library, including rare collectibles. If Bill wasn't reading in his spare time, he was building model airplanes. His large collection of scale models was renowned among local model enthusiasts for its historical accuracy and attention to detail. He also enjoyed judging the local model competitions at Elliot's department store in Bracebridge.

Bill was also a devoted fan of the Montreal Canadiens, closely following the team for 55 years. His sons vividly remember the times he would take them to see the Habs at the Forum in Montreal.

Bill was predeceased by his mother in 1998 and is survived by his father, the Venerable Samuel Craymer, his wife Elizabeth, his five children, Michael and his wife Mary, Jane and her husband Donald, Stephen and his wife Rebecca, John and his wife Patricia, his daughter Mary, and his eight grandchildren, Michael John Spencer, Sarah, Lisa, Samuel, Helena, Benjamin, Jessica and Emmett.

Funeral services were held on June 8 at St. Thomas' Anglican Church in Bracebridge, conducted by Rev. Rosalie Goos. The eulogy was given by his long time friend, Robert Clements of Toronto. Pallbearers were close friends, Dr. Ronald Stokes, Robert Clements, Dennis Hay, brother-in-law Ronald Payne, godson Darren Clements and son-in-law Donald Mink. Bill requested that any donations be made to the South Muskoka Hospital Foundation.