

BILL BUCK, TAU '50 – A LIFE WELL-LIVED IN TAU KAPPA PHI

A Tribute by Greg McElroy, Phi Alpha #131

It's always hard to say goodbye to a friend or a family member, but it can be especially difficult when the person who has left you was one with whom you just shared a pleasant experience a short time ago. I am sad to announce to the Zeta Psi world that our Fraternity's most prolific benefactor over the past four-plus decades, William C. "Bill" Buck, Tau '50, passed away on Wednesday, March 29th, at his Florida winter home with his wife of 68 years, Laura, and his daughters at his bedside. Though it is not surprising that a man of nearly 95 years would pass away, it came as a surprise to me because I was privileged to enjoy a pleasant lunch with him and another extraordinarily generous Zeta who lives in the same community, Dick Brickman, Alpha Epsilon '54, on March 13th. Bill had battled some challenging health issues earlier in his life—including surviving cancer in his late 40s or early 50s and more recently, he was being treated for some other issues, but he appeared to be in good health and in his usual good spirits when the three of us got together for our lunch gathering.

So how did my friendship evolve with a man 20 years my senior? Quite simply, he was a great Zeta who wished to be involved and I was a conduit for that involvement. We clicked because we both had a vision of building the endowment of Zeta Psi Educational Foundation. I distinctly recall the time that he and I visited the office of Howard Butcher III, Sigma '23, CEO of Butcher & Singer in his Center City Philadelphia Office and we pitched him for funding a scholarship fund, which Brother Butcher agreed to do. During our car trips around the northeast, I got to know Bill personally and discovered how he and his two brothers—his older brother Jim and his younger brother Whip (Tau '54)—decided to purchase a share of the Philadelphia Phillies franchise in the 1980s. Starting in about 1985, Bill agreed to host about two dozen Zetes in his owner's box for one game each year. I gladly coordinated that annual event on his behalf and it was a highlight during my years as Zeta Psi's Executive Director and for a long time after I left that position. Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic ended that tradition, but it will always be remembered warmly by the dozens of those who had attended those annual events (several of whom attended all or most of those Phillies Nights).



As a fundraising professional, I have met and interacted with hundreds of people of wealth. I'd have to say that Bill was one of them – as he had an extraordinary record of philanthropy – but he was never the least bit arrogant or showy and was eager to meet and greet every person who wanted to approach him at any social gathering. And of course, he loved his Phillies and they gave him the ultimate euphoria in 2008 when they won the World Series. He told me after they unexpectedly made the World Series last fall how fulfilling that was to him after the pandemic and the years in which his team didn't do so well. So his last year of life was one of good times and I can say this without resorting to the common cliché: Bill Buck's was truly a Life Well Lived and also one that we as Zetes can call one in Tau Kappa Phi. May he rest in peace!

Zeta Psi Political Leaders Past and Present

This is a partial list of the many Zetes who have served their countries

CURRENT

Bethlenvalvy, Hon. Peter

Achievements: Minister of Finance for the Province of Ontario (2021-present).

Chapter: Alpha Psi, 1982 (McGill University)

Menendez, Rob

Achievements: Congressman, U.S. House of Representatives, New Jersey's Eighth Congressional District.

Chapter: Upsilon, 2006 (University of North Carolina)

Aspin, Les

Achievements: United States Representative from 1971 to 1993 and United States Secretary of Defense from January 21, 1993 to February 3, 1994.

Chapter: Eta, 1960 (Yale University)

Bass, John R.

Achievements: American diplomat who served as the United States Ambassador to Georgia (2009–2012), Turkey (2014–2017), and Afghanistan (2017–2020).

Chapter: Gamma, 1986 (Syracuse University)

Bowles, Erskine

Achievements: 19th White House Chief of Staff (1997–1998) under President Clinton. 18th Administrator of the Small Business Administration (1993–1994). President, University of North Carolina System (2005–2010).

Chapter: Upsilon, 1967 (University of North Carolina)

Brown, Scott

Achievements: Former US Senator - Massachusetts, US Ambassador to New Zealand.

Chapter: Kappa, 1981 (Tufts University)

Bush, Prescott

Achievements: Former US Senator - Connecticut (1952–1963).

Chapter: Eta, 1917 (Yale University)

Padilla, Alejandro (Alex)

Achievements: United States Senator from California (2020–Present). California Secretary of State (2015–2020), California State Senator (2006–2014), Chair of the Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Communications.

Chapter: Rho Alpha, 1994 (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

Dean, Dr. Howard

Achievements: 79th Governor of Vermont (August 13, 1991–January 8, 2003), Former Chairman, Democratic National Committee (February 12, 2005–January 21, 2009).

Chapter: Eta, 1971 (Yale University)

Pepper, George Wharton

Achievements: U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania from January 9, 1922–March 4, 1927. Honorary degree from Lafayette College, 1922. Namesake for the George Wharton Pepper Prize at Lafayette College, awarded annually to the senior "who most nearly represents the Lafayette ideal." A founding member of the Pennsylvania Bar Association. Nephew of past Phi Alpha (1892) Dr. William Pepper, Sigma, 1857.

Chapter: Sigma

Wachowich, Allan

Achievements: Former Chief Justice, Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta

Chapter: Mu Theta, 1958 (University of Alberta)

Wilson, Pete

Achievements: 36th Governor of California (1991–1999). US Senator - California (1983–1991). San Diego, CA Mayor (1971–1983)

Chapter: Eta, 1965 (Yale University)



To see more famous Zetes, scan the attached QR code.