

A TRIBUTE TO DR. W.E. SKELTON

By

Dr. Douglas McAlister

I was privileged to claim Bill Skelton as my mentor and friend for over 35 years. Everyone he knew, talked to, or met had a special meaning to him. He was always so glad to see and be with his friends. He treasured his associations.

Bill had no casual acquaintances. Every person had a special significance to him. To him, a stranger was a friend, and potential supporter to the things he loved: Virginia Tech, Rotary International, and the Smith Mountain Lake 4-H Center.

I will remember Bill in his work, where he always displayed endless vitality, imagination, discipline, and a degree of tenacity I have never seen before.

In Rotary, Bill worked faithfully and effectively. His life embodied Rotary's motto of "Service Above Self". He exemplified, better than any person I know, the cherished ideals of Rotary. He truly changed the work of Rotary and its 1.2 million members in more than 200 countries.

We should be thankful to have had Bill among us for 89 years. I cannot do or say anything that could ever do justice to his life and the impact it has had on my own family. We will recall and cherish memories that will never fade, but rather they will grow more vivid as we re-visit them and nurture them for future generations.

Bill was born on January 10, 1919 in Dinwiddie County. That year, the

- First Miss America was crowned
- First successful parachute jump in the U.S. was made
- Treaty of Versailles was signed ending World War I with Germany
- Pop-up toaster was invented

In conversations with Bill, he had noted that there were NO

- Cell phones
- Computers
- Traffic lights
- Diesel or jet engines
- Electric washing machines
- Atomic bombs
- Microwave ovens or a thousand others things we take for granted today

Bill Skelton saw and adapted to a lot of change in his life. We will always remember his life and his impact on Virginia Tech, Rotary International, the 4-H Center, and this great Commonwealth he loved. His influence with the extended Hokie family will never be forgotten.

Bill's dedication to the youth of the Commonwealth epitomizes the 4-H motto, *To Make the Best Better!* During his entire life, he had a strong conviction to living daily the 4-H pledge he took at an early age.

I pledge
My head to clearer thinking,
My heart to greater loyalty
My hands to larger service, and
My health to better living,
For my club, my community, my country,
And my world.

Bill truly spent his entire life using his head, heart, hands and health to create a better life for the youth of our region and indeed the entire Commonwealth.

There are only a handful of people who come into your world and touch your life in a dramatic fashion. Some of the people are just flickers of light during a long life while others are a consistent GLOW for years.

For me, Bill was my consistent glow for over 35 years. Bill has left this earth but he will never leave our minds and hearts. How lucky we all were that he touched our lives. How lucky the heavens are now that Bill has joined it. I am sure that by now he has already re-structured the Hokie chapter up there and applied Rotary's Four Way Test as a code of ethics to develop respect and understanding.

Of the things we think, say or do. . .

It is the *Truth*?

Is it *Fair* to all concerned?

Will it build *Goodwill* and *Better Friendships*?

Will it be *Beneficial* to all concerned?

Bill was a most remarkable man with a strong sense of purpose and determination. I am most honored to have known Bill Skelton and call him my friend. When I think of him, I will remember this quote from a proverb: Good men must die but death cannot kill their names. And may I modify - - - their actions and good deeds.