

Patton, William Bradford (“Bill”) (February 12, 1939 --April 5, 2016)



Bill Patton from Mason City, Iowa became a beloved and valuable member of our class. Residing in South Younker Hall, Bill lettered in wrestling, track and cross-country and was a member of Honor G. Described by a coach as “small, tough and wiry,” Bill wrestled in the 130-pound category and was captain of the team his senior year when he received the John Teget Most Valuable Wrestler award. He received the B.A. degree in biology in June 1961. Bill treasured the small-college experience, saying he would have been lost as a student and athlete at a much larger school.

After graduating from Grinnell, he decided to abandon his plan to become a physician and instead entered the insurance business as an agent in his hometown. That was interrupted by three-and-a half-years of active duty (1962-1965) with the U.S. Navy as Communications Officer and Assistant Operations Officer in the Western Pacific. For this service Bill was awarded the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the National Defense Service Medal and the Vietnam Service Medal.

Bill then began a distinguished career in the U.S. Naval Reserve. In 1978, for example, he was in command of a Reserve telecommunications station in Greece and successfully developed a plan to integrate his reserve unit into an active-duty counterpart demonstrating that the “One Navy Total Force” concept worked. Bill retired as a Captain, USNR.

After his naval active duty, he returned to the insurance business, this time for several years in Des Moines with Aetna Life and Casualty as a senior claims representative. He then joined a Des Moines electrical products distributor, Stitzell Electric Supply Company, where he became a vice president, director and shareholder.

After his early retirement, Bill was able to “enjoy the other things in life—family, grandkids, sports activities, and travel.” His sports activities included being a timer for the Drake Relays for over 20 years and an avid University of Iowa (“Hawkeye”) sports fan. He also was an elder and active member of Covenant Presbyterian Church of West Des Moines as well as the Downtown Rotary Club. He said, “Grinnell provided me with an education, skills, and ability to continue to learn to accomplish the things that I have.”



Bill died April 5, 2016, at UnityPoint Iowa Methodist Medical Center in Des Moines. He is survived by his wife of 40 years, Sally Montgomery Patton; sons Scott (Angie) and David (LeAnn); step-son Shawn (Brenda) Shearer; step-daughter Heidi Koch, 15 grandchildren and a former wife, Mary Lou Beach Patton Fitch.

Duane W. Krohnke