

ACC NEWS



President's Page: Attitudes Are Contagious A Tribute to William D. Nelligan On His 25th Anniversary With The College*

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What is contagious is the attitude of William D. Nelligan! For a quarter of a century (1965-1990) his steadfast, upbeat philosophy and compassionate personality have molded the fortunes and growth of the American College of Cardiology and its membership. In large part the respected and influential position that the College enjoys today has been the result of Bill Nelligan's total commitment to the College, first as its Executive Director and now as its Executive Vice President. His management and interpersonal skills, his encyclopedic embrace of administrative qualities and his general enthusiasm have generated lively and unusual productivity both from his staff and from physician members. It seems only proper to acknowledge his remarkable tenure and leadership on the occasion of his 25th anniversary of service to the College.

The respect and affection that College members feel for their Executive Vice President is partly attributable to the fact that Bill Nelligan is a man whose life exemplifies a commendable philosophy. It is above all a philosophy of service:

"We take pride in our work and we pledge to do what is right and to fix the things that go wrong."

"Members are the purpose of our work, they are not interruptions of it."

"We take personal responsibility to ensure that all members, potential members and coworkers receive a timely, efficient and courteous response to their need."

"Negotiating builds membership."

Bill Nelligan adopted this philosophy from a fellow association executive in the Washington, D.C. area and the clarity of focus is unmistakable. Furthermore, the words are always backed up by actions. In word and deed he has elevated himself and the College to a lofty level in the worldwide cardiovascular community. In telling his story the best place to start is at the beginning.

In his hometown of Halstead, Kansas, Bill Nelligan's affinity for medicine began when he delivered newspapers to Dr. Arthur Hertzler, author of *The Horse and Buggy Doctor*. Bill was educated at the University of Wichita and the University of Kansas, graduating in 1949 with a journalism degree from the William Allen White School of Journalism. After a brief employment selling advertising space in the Kansas City *Star and Times* he managed the University of Kansas Southwest Adult Education Extension Center before becoming Executive Director of the Department of Postgraduate Education for the University of Kansas Medical School in Kansas City in 1955. In 1964 he moved to Augusta, Georgia to become assistant to the President of the Medical College of Georgia. His tenure there was brief, as he came to the attention of the officers of the American College of Cardiology, who were seeking a new director.

He was persuaded to join the budding organization in 1965, during the presidential term of Dr. Eliot Corday. ACC membership was then around 2,000, with an administrative staff of four and an annual budget of \$80,000. There is a story that Bill Nelligan agreed to join the College if the national office were moved from its original location in the Empire State Building in New York City to Washington, D.C. An agreement was struck between Dr. George Griffith and his search committee and Bill Nelligan became the Executive Director on July 1, 1965, succeeding Dr. Philip Reichert, who became Executive Director Emeritus and Historian. Eliot Corday wrote at that time, "This man Nelligan is a jewel!"

The first landlord for the American College of Cardiology in the Washington, D.C. area was the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, located in Bethesda, Maryland. However, under Bill Nelligan's leadership, the College grew so rapidly in programs, commitments and personnel that by the early 1970s the College leaders began a search for a permanent home. When Bill Nelligan found the 10 acre site where the Eeart House now stands, the owner wanted to sell all 10 acres. The College needed only 6 acres, but Bill's negotiating and persuasive powers led

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to the purchase of the entire 10 acre site for the 6 acre price. By the move-in date of May 1977, Dr. Dwight Harken's building committee had secured the \$5 million needed, in either money in hand or pledges.

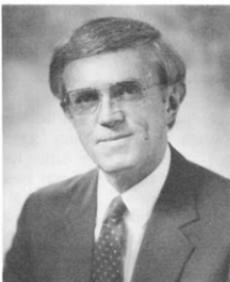
In 1983 Bill Nelligan's title was changed to Executive Vice President. In 1985 the original 48,000 square foot building was enlarged to 78,000 square feet, and today plans for yet another 32,000 square feet are on the drawing board. In the meantime, the College has grown to 18,000 members, with an administrative staff of more than 100 employees.

While devoting his main energies to the American College of Cardiology, Bill Nelligan has somehow found time to serve as Vice-Chairman of the American Society of Association Executives (1981) and as President of the Professional Convention Management Association (1974) and the American Association of Medical Society Executives (1986). He has held key committee chairmanships for the American Medical Association, the American Medical Writers Association and the Arthur E. Hertzler Research Foundation in Halstead, Kansas. Since 1988 he has also been a member of the U.S. Information Agency's Private Sector Medical Science Advisory Committee. Most recently he was nominated to the Board of the Friends of the National Library of Medicine.

His awards from these activities are numerous and include the "Man With a Heart" award in 1975 from the New York Cardiologists Society and the Harold Swanberg Distinguished Service Award in 1978 from the American Medical Writers Association. In 1984 he received the distinguished Key Award from the American Society of Association Executives. He was voted an Honorary Member of the British Cardiac Society in 1988. In 1990 he received the Distinguished Service Award from the Professional Convention Management Association.

All of you who know Bill Nelligan will also know Dorothy Nelligan. Fortunately for the College, she has been at his side through all these years. I doubt that there is a more supportive wife or one who has been more dedicated to raising three fine sons. She also shares his long-time interest in diabetes mellitus. He has served on the National Committee of Diabetes (NIH appointment) (1975-1976), the Committee on Research Policy of the American Diabetes Association (1977-1978), the National Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases Advisory Council (NIH) (1986-1988) and the Prevention, Education, and Control Advisory Committee of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (1987 to the present).

In 1975 Bill Nelligan received a Presidential Citation from the American College of Cardiology. His Marshal for that occasion was Dwight Harken, who portrayed him as follows:



William D. Nelligan, CAE
Executive Vice President
American College of Cardiology

I bring for this uncommon honor an uncommon man who has rendered a decade of uncommon service to our College. William D. Nelligan, Executive Director of the College for the past 10 years, has contributed more than one man's share to building the American College of Cardiology into a national and international resource. He has been the catalyst who has moved us when we were slow, the synergist who has made us perform better than the sum of our parts and courted cooperation and courtesy among all of us, always. He has done much of what we should have done, and for us, much of what we could not do.

We cannot here detail this man's great and small services, his administrative genius or even the high regard in which he is held by his peers, if there be such. However, we must pause to salute Dorothy Nelligan, who through her support of his efforts and sacrifice of their time together, has enhanced and extended his contributions to the College.

These words are no less meaningful to all of us today, nor do I believe that his meaning to the College could be better stated.

In recognition of the breadth of his services to his fellow men, his profession and his friends and colleagues, the American College of Cardiology bestowed its Distinguished Service Award on Bill Nelligan in 1986. Dr. Charles Fisch, who prepared and read the text for this award, quoted words from Bill

Nelligan's father: "The service that you give to God and your fellow man is the rent you pay for the right to live"; and as Charles Fisch stated, "There is no doubt that Bill has more than amply repaid the rent."

I am sure that everyone who has worked closely with Bill Nelligan can recall personal occasions when his warm, compassionate nature became a source of sturdy support. That has certainly been my own experience. He once drove 3 hours from Washington, D.C. just after returning from an extended trip to Russia to visit me and my family on the eastern shore of Maryland at a time of sadness for us. I believe Bill Nelligan feels that College members are a part of his family; thus, such expressions of friendship from him are not unusual. But I wonder if he knows how much they are appreciated.

In 2 years Bill Nelligan will retire. It is difficult to imagine the College without his wisdom and steady influence. In this day and age of standard setting he has set standards for his successor and for us all that should keep us busy measuring up to them for decades. But for now we salute Bill and Dorothy Nelligan for 25 years of unique, remarkable and very much appreciated service to the American College of Cardiology.

On cares like these, if length of days attend,
May Heav'n, to bless those days, preserve my friend.
(Alexander Pope. "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot")