

## A Tribute to Bill Roberts

Bill Roberts, one of the three people, along with Rick LaFon and Paul Sher, who was considered a founder of NARPPS (National Association of Rehabilitation Professionals in the Private Sector), passed away in the Fall after a long illness. Bill was a life long rehabilitationist and an active professional for people with disabilities. In addition to his years of work within the profession, including his service as NARRPS President on two occasions, Bill was a vigorous and unrelenting advocate for legislative and policy development and change for the profession, the proper role of all constituents, and especially for people who needed our help.

While learning of Bill's passing belatedly, it does not seem out of character that this transition occurred with little notice to our profession. Bill was as unpretentious as he was prolific in his activities for and on behalf of the profession. Bill was unassuming, engaging, quiet but persistent, always respectful to others and always delivered his comments and concerns with a wonderful measure of humor. I can still hear that little laugh he had when he playfully and persistently made his point during a conference session or during informal conversations. Steve Shedlin accurately captured the essence of Bill's style that Steve encountered during his presidency (I experienced the same when I was president):

*I am guessing that many past NARPPS and IARP presidents had the same experience with Bill that I had during my tenure as president. Bill was forever calling me with news items and ideas addressing our profession. Sometimes I dreaded those calls, as that guy could chat, but I never met a fellow more dedicated to the profession and equally important, to our Association as Bill.*

Other past presidents had these comments:

*Bill always impressed me as being guided by strong principles and what would be in the best interest of the association. I am sorry to learn of his passing...(Jeff Carlisle).*

*Bill...had a tremendous sense of humor - a must in our profession. I recall him pulling my son onto his lap (who was five at the time) at one of the national conferences and taking the time to explain the appropriate etiquette to use around Paul's dog and how it is okay to ask folks with disabilities "silly questions"....I thought at the time he looked almost like Santa Claus posing as a rehab counselor....he was certainly a gift to our profession and I will miss him!" (Maria Henderson).*

*I knew Bill for years. He came to see me about two years ago. With all that was going on [Bill's illness, family, etc.] he wanted to talk about rehabilitation legislation in California. Always the rehab person. (Larry Gordon).*

*Bill was the beacon of light that pointed the way towards the creation of NARPPS. Bill would always make constructive recommendations, question concepts and ideas, and communicate with other founders regularly. He also kept us on track and encouraged us to maintain our schedule leading to success. Bill was forceful, knew rehab inside and out,*

*and [had] an instinct for getting at the facts. [Bill possessed] a sustained doggedness to broaden the field of rehabilitation over a long period of time. In Bill, you had a sense that he really enjoyed life, was a careful observer, and understood why rehabilitation is such an important profession.” (Paul Sher).*

Bill truly was a pioneer, and to our benefit, was in the right place at the right time. Given the many wonderful and positive qualities that he possessed and shared, Bill deservedly should receive recognition and much credit for contributing so significantly to the development and growth of our profession and association. Bill was the true believer and he shall be missed.

Tim Field