

REMEMBERING WILLIAM HAMILTON WALLACE

By Dan Germond

Judgement: Having the ability to examine facts and make correct decisions. A CGA skill! Oh, of course we know Bill passed his 'judge-ment day' with flying colors! So, who would have thought he'd be well into his 95th year before his judgement' could be called into question? -- After his wonderful family finished a visit, his hospice nurse heard Bill chuckle "Mr. Wallace,' she asked, "what are you chuckling about?" Bill smiled at her and said, "Oh, I'm going to play one last bad joke on my family... I'm gonna make them listen to Dan Germond speak at my funeral!"

A giant of a man, yet gentle, his was the magnificent Depression era - WWII generation, a generation many call America's Greatest Genera-tion. Bill exemplified the very best of that generation. Hamilton - you and your wonderful brother and sisters, and your spouses, shared with me`the great privilege of being children of these magnificent Americans - perhaps you, like me, take this for granted all too often How lucky we are and were.

William Hamilton Wallace was born March 6, 1922, a native of Gilbert where he was delivered by Dr. Benjamin Moerr — who later, as Arizona's Governor would famously nearly declare war on California about Colorado River Water! (Bill may well have been his foot soldier years before he would work for Salt River Project!) A proud native Arizonan 'Brave Heart' Bill cherished his Scottish roots!

Farmers and ranchers built America, from our founding fathers through following decades centuries. The crops had to be harvested; but first planted, and tended. It was pretty much a six day, 18-hour a day life. His family dad, grand-dad and uncles homesteaded Arizona in its early territorial days. Because of WWII, the government said, 'We'll buy all the cotton you can produce!' Sunday, of course, was left for worship.

Young Bill — age 6 — heard a 'thud' in the corral; went to discover his dad had suffered his 4th stroke - this one fatal. Bill was then forced to tell his mom. Like many other such businesses, the ranch failed with the Depression sweeping across still young America.

Oh Bill had plenty of 'victories', like finding time to become one of America's earliest Eagle Scouts! Sports and the classroom too.

Bill's dear mom would re-marry a fine, retired doctor who also had a ranch, but the Depression was in full swing. Bill knew he would not be able to afford college unless he could get a so-called 'free education'. He applied for Annapolis, The U.S. Naval Academy. Bill was turned down, but with the advice to take some courses to brush up on his math skills -- which, though bitterly disappointed, he cheerfully did at Tempe Normal School, eventually to be ASU.

Fast forward one year, Bill learned of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, CT (How coincidental his parents gave him a middle name of Hamilton - Alexander Hamilton, of course in 1790 founded The Revenue Cutter Service, which would become The Coast Guard much later!) Alex would be so proud of his near namesake!

Word came of his acceptance in a telegram, 'Be here the following day!" Bill was loaded on a DC3; arrived at Grand Central Station, Gate 38 with a train ride and cab to New London, seconds before oath time! He was only the 4th CGA appointed from Arizona. The cadets would soon see WWII and their

course work was altered to be graduated in 3 years. Americans 'saddled up' for WWII with their hands deeply calloused - we forget - from a terrible depression.

All boys at the CGA would get their Saturday night dates from neighboring Connecticut Womens' College. A beautiful lady named Almeda was asked for a date by Bill - "Go with him" her friends said "he's a good dancer!"

Bill would later take Almeda out in a canoe to an island to propose, "Let me think about it!" Soon another canoe ride ensued. Acceptance! And, marriage planned, but not til after WWII. "No," said a friend to Almeda, "Do it now - I know so many who never came back." So hasty plans brought a June 30 wedding in Harrisburg, PA. Bill shipped off on a huge Navy ship. On this transport, charged with bringing Polish orphans around to the U.S. via New Zealand. Bill honed his lifelong volunteer and charitable values. Their five finest accomplishments are here in this church today!

Religion was a great part of Bill and Almeda's life. This beautiful church, Shepherd of the Hills Congregational United Church of Christ, on East Lafayette, one of the Valley's most gorgeous streets, was conceived and built in large measure by Bill and Almeda and their fellow church members many decades ago. Listen! - We can hear their voices here today!

After time at SRP he would utilize his engineering skills to form his own engineering sales company. He and Almeda would grace a multitude of civic causes; Almeda, Foundation for the Blind; Bill, longtime docent of Tempe Historical Society to name only a few. He would be the oldest CGA partner to help spread word of opportunity of the education and career opportunities to countless Arizona youth. He was duly recognized by The Commandant of the Coast Guard, and is deeply revered across Arizona's CG and military community.

For his volunteerism he was named to Arizona's Veterans Hall of Fame.

How do you sum up this extraordinary life? In the more than two decades I've been so privileged to know him.... he is just so - Not About Himself - Hamilton said, in moving Bill from 2322 S. Rogers Ct., and sorting boxes, he was astounded to find all sorts of awards and certificates that had been squirreled away - totally fitting with his "Aw shucks" attitude toward his decades of service.

Our great nation was conceived by our founding fathers, charging future generations to cherish and expand liberty, freedom and opportunity. Bill and Almeda, thank you for your America... and now, Bill and Almeda have a gift for you - each of you, the magnificent "Wallace Clan" - their finest legacy THIS is your America!"

