



William Chambless

March 4, 1930 - June 19, 2011

A Remembrance of William Stephen Chambless, MD March 4, 1930-June 19, 2011

William Stephen Chambless, M.D., a long-time and well-respected Dallas ophthalmologist, died on June 19, 2011, of complications related to cancer. He was 81. He was known as Dr. Chambless to the thousands of patients he helped during his practice; as Steve to his friends, family and associates; as Doc Steve to his chili cook-off and golfing cohorts from Terlingua; as Grandad to his grandchildren; as the source of food, water and shelter to his dogs and cat; and as simply Dad to his three children, who were at his side when he passed comfortably away at his home on Fathers Day.

Dr. Chambless was born March 4, 1930, in Chickasha, Oklahoma, to James Gainor and Mildred Mathews Chambless. He was the middle of five children, with four sisters -- Jean, Audrey, Geneva, and Gai. He worked growing up in his father's sheet metal factory, and, as a Fightin' Chick at Chickasha High School, lettered in football and basketball, made the Honor Society, and was voted Best All-Around Boy of the senior class of 1948. After graduating, he then attended Oklahoma University and earned a degree in chemistry in 1952.

Following college, he served his country in the Korean War from 1953-1955, as a Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps, and was honorably discharged. He was proud of his service to his country but was equally adamant about the horrors of war, which he came to believe have been visited unnecessarily on the country and supported too easily by those who maintain a comfortable distance.

After his tour of duty in Korea, he attended medical school at the University of Oklahoma and received his MD in 1959, followed by residency at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas. Specializing in ophthalmology and ophthalmic surgery, he joined a private practice in Dallas with Dr. William Harris and Dr. Lester Quinn, and then moved his family to Plano in 1966. He formed his own private practice in the mid-1970s.

As an eye surgeon, he was one of the early adopters and innovators of the surgical technique for removing cataracts called phacoemulsification, which, coupled with intraocular lens implants instead of so-called "Coke bottle glasses," helped cataract patients achieve better post-operative vision. He continued innovating with the technique throughout his career, a highlight of which came in 1977 when he visited the former Soviet Union with other U.S. ophthalmologists to discuss surgical techniques.

When he retired in 1994, he left a practice of several thousand patients for whom he and his team (including long-timers Amy, Mike, Nancy, Sandy, Lois, Joyce, Helen, and Shelley) had provided eye care for close to 30 years. He was a founding member of the American College of Eye Surgeons and served as president. In 1997 he was inducted into the American Board of Eye

Surgery's Hall of Fame, and in 2001 he was offered and accepted the organization's position of Director Emeritus.

After retirement, Dr. Chambless discovered the camaraderie of chili cook-offs and golf scrambles in Terlingua, Texas, through the family of his closest friend, Wes Ritchey, and his pilgrimages to Terlingua were annual highlights for him. He spent many hours and days driving the back roads of West Texas, pulling a travel trailer, taking photographs of Texas sunsets, and enjoying the open road.

In his final years, his activity was somewhat reduced, and he spent most of his time at his self-designed cedar home on 15 acres in rural Denton County. His joys were simple: building rustic furniture (he was a lifelong carpenter and wood refinisher); riding his tractor and cutting brush; planting a vegetable garden each spring and eating fresh tomatoes; playing golf every Fathers Day; cursing at the lack of rain; becoming exasperated with his PC, on which he blogged; opining that most pro sports are fixed; and watching and emphatically agreeing with Fox News and especially Bill O'Reilly. His constant companions were his blue heeler Blue, his white German shepherd Powder, and a mean but affectionate black cat named Bucky, who kept critters under control.

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Dr. Chambless is survived by his daughter Karin of Silver Spring, Maryland, son Steve of Krugerville, Texas, and son Jim of Lewisville, Texas; grandchildren Karuna and Roshan; sisters Jean Chambless of Frisco, Texas,

Audrey McClellan of Little Elm, Texas, and Gai Jones of Ojai, California; and seven nieces and nephews.

He was a helluva guy, and he will be missed by all who knew him. His children already miss him dearly and will do so for the rest of their lives.

In accordance with Dr. Chambless's wishes, his children will hold a celebration of his life at his home on Sunday, July 24. Preparations are underway, and those interested in attending should send email to xisrgn@msn.com.

Memorial donations may be made in the name of William Stephen Chambless to the American Board of Eye Surgery Foundation (PO Box 3223, Bryan, TX 77805) and to the Humane Society of Flower Mound (www.fmhs.org; 1601 Arrowhead Drive, Flower Mound, TX 75028-2636).