

In Memoriam

William Gruen (July 19, 1919–October 16, 2004)



William “Bill” Gruen, President and founder of Ambulatory Monitoring, Inc., died peacefully on October 16, 2004 in New York City after a valiant battle with cancer.

Bill was born in Vienna. After immigrating to the United States, he served in the US Army and was stationed in Germany with Occupation Forces after WWII, in charge of medical supplies. In 1944, he married Gerta Weiniger in New York City. Subsequently, he graduated from the Institute of Radio Engineers in 1957, and obtained a MA from NYU in 1976. Bill pursued a career as a medical device entrepreneur and in the 1970s founded Ambulatory Monitoring, Inc.

As CEO of Ambulatory Monitoring, Inc. in Ardsley, NY, he developed his love of sleep, chronobiology and circadian rhythms. His research interests led him to develop many scientific theories and the equipment needed to test those theories. Bill’s forte was taking ideas that were new, creating products that no one ever knew they needed, and then educating people on the value of both these products and the ideas behind them. He was co-inventor of the Resptrace/Inductotrace respiratory monitor, which is well-known in sleep and pulmonary laboratories

throughout the world, and he pioneered the now well-accepted science of actigraphy, which uses body motion as a diagnostic tool. Over the years he perfected the actigraph, miniaturized it and added additional features such as measurements of light exposure and temperature.

Bill was a Fellow of the New York Academy of Sciences. He was also a board member of the National Sleep Foundation, and a corporate member of both the Sleep Research Society and the Society for Light Treatment and Biological Rhythms. Bill had an extremely energetic mind and read widely, especially on scientific topics of historical importance and on brilliant new thinkers.

Bill was a principal investigator on many NIH SBIR grants. His latest interest began when Gerta, his wife of many years, succumbed to cancer in 1997. Bill designed actigraphs to assess fatigue in cancer patients who were receiving chemotherapy. He greatly believed in chronotherapy, i.e. that cancer therapy could be enhanced by considering the time of day when administering medication.

Throughout Bill’s scientific career he never lost touch with his friends, who were very important to him. He felt pain when his friends did; he shared their concerns and worries and eagerly sought solutions for them. Many people viewed Bill as a close friend and even as a family member. His generous nature and concern for the well-being of other people brought him to be loved by many. Although Bill and Gerta did not have children of their own, many children of his colleagues and friends were fortunate to have them as honorary grandparents.

Bill’s mind was always very active and his major love in life was for the scientific challenges that were before him. Everyone knew that Bill would always discuss a new idea or the solution to research problems at first contact, and then once satisfied, he would talk about everyday matters before finishing with a joke, sometimes quite risqué. His involvement with the Humor Club made him a never-ending source of jokes.

In Bill’s last few months, he was courageous, optimistic and brave. He knew the end of his life would not be far away but his mind was scientifically active throughout times of pain and discomfort. Until the very end, he was going into the office and calling friends and colleagues with new research ideas.

Bill was a pioneer in the sleep field. He was a kind and gentle human being, and his death is a loss for the entire sleep community. His love, caring, wisdom and friendship will be missed.

It is the intention of the Sleep Research Society (SRS) to develop a lasting memorial bearing Bill Gruen's name, which would continue his work now that he is no longer present. To this end, donations may be sent to the SRS to be used toward establishing an annual award in support of a young investigator doing innovative work in sleep research.

While details remain to be worked out, we hope to make the first award in 2005.

Michael Thorpy^a, Sonia Ancoli-Israel^b

^a*Montefiore Medical Center, 111 East 210th Street,
Bronx, NY 10467-2490, USA*

^b*Department of Psychiatry,
University of California San Diego School of Medicine,
La Jolla California, 92093, USA
E-mail address: sancoliisrael@ucsd.edu*