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# Richmond Times-Dispatch

Published: October 06, 2011

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## Retired Dr. William E. Holland dies at 75

By RANDY HALLMAN



When William E. Holland read the New Testament passage in which Christ admonishes his disciples to visit those in prison, he took it literally and personally.

The retired cardiologist became a mainstay in area prison ministry, visiting the incarcerated, bringing a message of love and hope for salvation — and adding a new chapter to his own legacy.

Dr. Holland died of complications from melanoma at his Richmond home Saturday. He was 75.

A memorial service will be held Friday at 11 a.m. at Bon Air Baptist Church at 2531 Buford Road. Interment in Dr. Holland's hometown, Windsor, will be private.

When Dr. Holland retired from his distinguished medical career in 1998, he wasn't done helping people.

He volunteered at Virginia Commonwealth University's Cross-Over Clinic, which provides health care for the needy. He continued to make medical mission trips to Honduras. And though he no longer had patients from his own practice, he visited the sick at least twice a week.

And he took his message of faith to those in prison.

"The prison ministry was very important to him," said his wife, Linda Holland. "He volunteered with the Bon Air Baptist Church prison ministry team, and eventually he started preaching once a month. He loved it. He worked hard on his sermons."

Dr. Holland often worked with Gary Sims, who operates Hope Aglow Ministries based in Lynchburg. Sims, who had served time himself for possession of stolen property and counterfeit money, said Dr. Holland reached prisoners in a straightforward way.

"Sometimes we pastors get a little bit too theological," Sims said. "He presented a clear message, expressing the simplicity of the Gospel.

"He was more of a teacher than a preacher. ... His message was well prepared and delivered clearly. He was always joyful and laughing."

He said the two of them — the ex-prisoner and the doctor — were close friends. "Bill never met a stranger," Sims said.

Dr. Holland's last visit to speak to prisoners was about two months ago at the Powhatan Correctional Center. Weakened by his cancer, Dr. Holland needed help walking, Sims recalled, and had to sit while he talked with the inmates.

Just four days before Dr. Holland died, Sims paid him a visit. "Bill said he wanted to go back one more time. ... He didn't make it, but even then, he still wanted to go."

Sims said that when Dr. Holland's illness prevented him from making his regular visits to the Powhatan facility, "prisoners were asking, 'Where's Bill?' I don't think he ever let any of them know that he was a doctor. He just talked to them directly and with compassion. He will be greatly missed."

Dr. Holland's son, Mark Holland, said his father inspired gratitude among so many whose lives he touched.

"No matter where we were — on the golf course or at Home Depot — somebody would come up to my father and thank him," said his son, a software engineer who lives in Richmond.

"People would remember he had treated them or treated a family member. ... He had an incredible bedside manner. He put people at ease, made them feel comfortable in the hospital. That was a part of his job that he loved."

Mark Holland said former patients often gave his father gifts — sometimes things they had made. One such gift was a stone, about 18 inches wide, that his father kept in his flower garden at his home.

The patient had engraved the gray stone with these words, all in capital letters, on a smooth surface: "THANKS DR. HOLLAND FOR GIVING ME A LONGER AND BETTER LIFE. MAY GOD BLESS YOU."

Dr. Holland was a graduate of the Medical College of Virginia. He served in the Army and was stationed at Fort Lee. He taught at MCV and practiced in Norfolk, then Richmond.

He was co-founder of Virginia Cardiovascular Associates and helped start the cardiac catheterization lab at Henrico Doctors' Hospital.

He was a fellow in the American Heart Association, served as governor of the American College of Cardiology and received the Richmond Academy of Medicine's Distinguished Service Award.

Dr. Holland comes from a family in which public service is a tradition. His father, Shirley T. Holland Sr., and brothers, Richard J. Holland Sr. and Clarence A. Holland served in the General Assembly. Another brother, Shirley T. Holland Jr., was killed in a plane crash flying the "Burma Hump" for the Army Air Forces in World War II.

Clarence A. Holland, a Virginia Beach physician, survives his brother.

In addition to his wife, brother and son, Dr. Holland's survivors include two other sons, Gary Holland, who lives near Salt Lake City, and Brant Holland of Richmond; three daughters, Susan H. Philips, Ann H. Tierney and Kathryn Holland, all of Richmond; two stepdaughters, Stephanie Helsley and Diane Bishop, both of Richmond; and 12 grandchildren.

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