



## **Dr. William R. (Bill) Center**

*Time was his only enemy and it has slain him.*

This page is in memory of my father, Bill Center, who was a far better father than I was a son. Although I'm certain that I was often a disappointment to him and pushed his patience to the limit, he was always supportive. When I reached the point where I wanted to do something constructive with my life, he was ready and willing to help. I could not have had a father who was a better model.

Bill was born in Tennessee in 1919. He was abandoned by his mother when he was around three years of age. He was taken in by the Smith family and lived with them until he married Dorothy Spann of Nashville. He served in the U.S. Army, in Europe, during World War II. Following the war, he returned to Nashville. He attempted to gain admittance to the University of Tennessee College of Medicine but was denied because his birth mother was not a Tennessee resident. He subsequently was admitted to and enrolled at Vanderbilt University. He obtained undergraduate and graduate degrees in both English and chemistry.

For a short time, after completing his studies, he taught high school. He left high school teaching to take a position teaching English at Meridian Junior College in Meridian, MS. After deciding that he didn't want to make a career of teaching English, he moved back to Nashville. He enrolled in a graduate program in audio/speech pathology at Peabody College and also worked as a chemist for a manufacturing company. Upon completion of his degree, he accepted a position in Atlanta, GA as the director of the Fairhaven School. Fairhaven was a non-profit, private school for retarded children. While director of the Fairhaven School, he started and directed the Bobby Dodd Workshop, which is still in operation.

The next step in his journey was to the University of Georgia, in Athens, where he completed a doctorate in mental retardation. After completing this degree, he took a position at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. He subsequently taught at the University of South Alabama in Mobile and the University of Western North Carolina in Cullowhee before returning to Tennessee to work for several years as the director of a psychological services cooperative. He later returned to teaching by taking a position at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro where he remained until he retired. After retiring from MTSU, he took a position as Special Education Director for a county school system. A few years later he retired for the second time due to health problems. Bill died in March, 1994 at the age of seventy-five.