Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison
On the Death of Professor Emeritus William Stuart Sykes

William Stuart Sykes was born on May 21, 1930 near Manchester, England, the son of Evelyn Whitfield Sykes and Norman Bramhall Sykes. He entered Oxford University’s Lincoln College at the age of 18 and studied biology and medicine, and obtained a master’s degree. He then completed his formal medical studies at Westminster School of Medicine in London and graduated in 1955. After his initial training in anaesthesia, he spent two years as a Major in the Royal Army Medical Corp. A 3 months period of his conscription was spent in Nigeria working as a physician and anaesthetist. Bill completed his postgraduate medical training in Anaesthetics in the UK and subsequently became a Fellow of the Faculty Anaesthetists of the Royal College of Surgeons. This was followed by a sojourn of several years while he did additional anaesthesia training and worked as an anaesthetist for the U.S. Air Force in Britain. While working with the US Air Force, Bill was befriended by Dr. Don Howland, a former Badger anesthesiologist, who recommended him to Dr. Sydney Orth, chairman of the Department of Anesthesiology at UW, and the subsequent chair, Dr. Karl Siebecker for a faculty position in Madison.

Bill and his devoted wife of 64 years, Elizabeth, immigrated to the United States with five sons, Christopher, Nicholas, Jonathan, Mark and Mathew in July of 1964 where he joined the faculty of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine. Subsequently two more sons, Andrew and David were born in the US in late 1964 and 1967. Over the next 32 years Bill was a highly regarded clinician, teacher and mentor. He trained several hundred physicians and countless medical students, many who followed in his footsteps. He had a particular interest in medical physics, which he taught the principles of to post graduate trainees, and computer science, building his own computers on several occasions.

In 1969, Professor Sykes became a tenured Associate Professor. He was the perioperative director for three decades during a time when the University Hospital operating rooms and procedural sights expanded anesthetic services dramatically. Bill helped direct the move to the “new” hospital in 1979 and co-coordinated daily, monthly and annual operating room schedules for staff and trainees until his retirement. He was considered a master of a broad spectrum of anaesthetic techniques including management of the difficult or near impossible airway, introduction or reintroduction of innovative anesthetics, and provision of anaesthesia in unique and challenging environmental situations (at high altitude, in high temperature and humidity and with limited resources).

Bill was active in his community and helped found the EMS service for Shorewood Hills and oversaw medical credentialing of physicians in Madison for over 15 years. After his retirement from the faculty in 1996, Bill remained active in the local and Wisconsin medical community for another 14 years as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Wisconsin Society of Anesthesiologists. His meticulous attention to detail kept this organization in good health and facilitated its expansion and the election of several of its members to major offices within the American Society of Anesthesiologists.

Bill had a dry wit and a sly sense of humor and was able to perceive the ridiculous to the sublime. He loved the local, Chicago, and Minneapolis opera offerings. He also treasured time with his family and enjoyed traveling extensively throughout the United States with them. His wife, seven sons, 14 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren survive him. His legacy includes his and their many accomplishments in and outside of medicine, and the work of the hundreds of practitioners that he taught and positively influenced.

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