



Dr. William R. (Bill) Center

Time was his only enemy and it has slain him.

This page is in memory of my father, William Russell 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 on January 17, 1919. He was abandoned by his father (Dillard) at or before birth and left in the care of John Marklin (grandfather), by his mother (Belle), probably when he was between one and two years old. His grandfather became seriously ill when he was around three years of age. He was taken in by friends of John Marklin, 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 he had no living family resident in the state of Tennessee. 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 Avco 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 helped found and then directed the Bobby Dodd Workshop for developmentally disabled adults, 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 March 20, 1994 at the age of seventy-five.