William R. McCabe, In Memoriam

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William R. McCabe (figure 1), a founding member of the Infectious Diseases Society of America, passed away with peace and dignity at his home in Virginia Beach, Virginia, on 24 May 2008 at the age of 80 years. Bill was born in Hugo, Oklahoma. He received his M.D. from the University of Oklahoma in 1953 and completed his postgraduate training in internal medicine at the University of Oklahoma Hospitals. He joined George Gee Jackson as a fellow in infectious diseases at the University of Illinois in 1958. There he made his seminal observations of endotoxin tolerance in humans and helped devise the classic McCabe-Jackson criteria to predict the likelihood of survival of patients with gram-negative bacteremia on the basis of the underlying disease (i.e., rapidly fatal, ultimately fatal, and nonfatal) [1]. This simple method has been repeatedly validated and shown to be a better predictor of survival than the APACHE II score [2]. He joined the faculty of the Boston University College of Medicine in 1963, where he rose to the ranks of professor of internal medicine and director of the Division of Infectious Diseases and the Maxwell Finland Laboratory of Infectious Diseases at the Boston City Hospital. A scientific conference on endotoxin and sepsis due to gram-negative bacteria was held in his honor when he retired from Boston University in 1991. His retirement did not last long; he served as a professor of microbiology at the University of New Mexico from 1990 to 1993 and chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases at Marshall University from 1993 to 1998. He devoted the last years of his life to his family in Virginia Beach.

Bill McCabe was an international authority on endotoxin, sepsis due to gram-negative bacteria, and the pathogenesis and treatment of pyelonephritis and staphylococcal infections. He authored or coauthored 145 publications in peer-reviewed medical journals. He was a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Infectious Diseases, of the Study Section on Bacteriology and Mycology of the National Institutes of Health, and of the editorial board of Infection and Immunity.

Bill was the father of 3 children and grandfather of 4 children. His former wife of 41 years, Shirelle Beals, worked with him in the laboratory during his most productive years. He retained his small-town Oklahoma drawl, wry sense of humor, and love of dogs, pipes, and sports cars throughout his life. He was an independent, critical thinker and a good friend to colleagues and his numerous fellows.

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References