

WILLIAM G. "BILL" WAGNER

by Rev. Robert L. Case

EDITORS NOTE:

Following is the memorial service for Bill Wagner. This message was written by Bill's pastor and friend, Reverend Robert L. Case and delivered on February 1, 1988, at First United Methodist Church of Jupiter/Tequesta.

We are gathered together this afternoon with sorrowful hearts because of the passing of Mr. William Wagner. Bill, as we know him, is survived by his wife, Joan, daughters, Susan Early and Peggy Wagner, brother LeRoy Wagner, and two grandchildren.

Although we are sad, we also feel glad and have a sense of joy in the midst of our sorrow. This joy comes from God's promises, the many means He has provided for us to receive comfort, and from the assurance we have concerning the one for whom we sorrow.

The apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: "Blessed be God . . . the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation . . ."

How grateful we are for the many ways in which God comforts us. Let us think of a few of these.

1. He provides us with friends. Friends are a precious possession. Bill had many friends. He had many friends because he was a friend. If you want to have friends, you must be a friend. Bill had christian friends which are the best. You too, have friends who sympathize with you and bring you much comfort.
2. Then, God has given us loved ones who share our sorrow, as we sympathize with each other, we receive a strength and a comfort. Bill loved his family dearly. He loved all of you who are his loved ones. As you share together your sorrow, you are comforted and strengthened.
3. God has given us the ability to remember, which can be a source of comfort. There are many things that we remember about Bill that will bless our lives for years to come. He was a good man. By this we mean that he was honorable, trustworthy, faithful, gentle, kind, sincere. He was good in the christian sense, which is genuinely good.

We remember his love for life and beauty. He fought to live. A number of times he underwent critical surgery in his fight to continue living the life he enjoyed. He loved nature and all the beauties of God's creation. For 22 years he was Golf Course Superintendent of the Tequesta Country Club. He is past

president of the Florida Chapter of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. He is past president of the Florida Turf Association. He loved beautiful flowers, grass, trees, and shrubbery. Just last week as I walked out of his house with Joan, I remarked about the beautiful Begonias and Impatiens that were blooming in his lawn. Joan told me that Bill usually planted those, but that since he was unable this year, the men who worked with him at the Country Club had planted them.

Joan had read to him a statement somebody else had written that speaks to us so well of Bill's love for the earth. The statement is as follows: "The secret is not a green thumb. The real secret is patience and gentleness. People who take time to care for the earth and love what God has created enhance the earth and all its miraculous ability to bring forth the beauty of God's creation."

The Honorable Carlton Stoddard, Mayor of Tequesta, in a Proclamation of Appreciation for the memorable community service of Bill, tells so beautifully of Bill's love for beauty and his contribution to the community that I shall read the proclaim in its entirety.

Village Of Tequesta

PROCLAMATION

OF APPRECIATION

for the Memorable Community Service of
WILLIAM G. WAGNER

WHEREAS, on January 29th, in the year of our Lord 1988, death brought to a close the life of William G. Wagner, esteemed Tequesta citizen and public servant who contributed immeasurably to the beauty and quality of life in our community; and

WHEREAS, the selfless service of Bill Wagner as Chairman of Tequesta's Board of Adjustment established guidelines for a more beautiful Tequesta; and in his role as

WHEREAS, Tequesta Country Club Golf Course Superintendent for 22 years, and Florida President of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, he created treasured landscape beauty and recreational enjoyment for the people of Tequesta and the state of Florida.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED —

That the Village Council of Tequesta join with our citizens in recognizing the lifetime contribution to our community of William G. "Bill" Wagner, beloved as "God's Gardener" and affectionately know to all as our friend.

In observance whereof, the flags at Tequesta Village Hall and Constitution Park for a period of three days from this date shall be flown at half staff. Duly authorized February 1, 1988, with the official seal of Tequesta affixed hereto.

Carlton D. Stoddard
Mayor

(SEAL)

Attest: Bill C. Kascavelis
Village Clerk

We remember Bill's love for Christ and the Church. He always managed to get released from the hospital sooner than the Doctors predicted. He was anxious to get home and back to church. Once when he came home only a few days after critical surgery, I went by his home the next day or so and was told he was at the golf course. He was faithful to duty and he was faithful to Christ and the church. Many times he would come home from having had surgery and the following Sunday he would be ushering - always with a smile and that firm handshake that made you know he was glad to see you.

We will always remember his courage and patience during his illness. He had several critical operations that were extremely painful but I never heard him complain. He went the limit in an effort to live!

The first time Bill had surgery, after I became pastor here, my wife and I went to Miami to see him. To our surprise, he was already up and out with Joan walking over the hospital grounds. And my, how faithfully and lovingly Joan stood by him. She was his constant companion and such a source of strength for him all the way to the end. He acknowledged his love and appreciation for such a wonderful wife, as well as wonderful daughters and other loved ones.

A few months ago he as president of the Methodist Men, an organization he loved, told of his illness. He said some people were healed, but God had not seen

fit to heal him. This, however, had not affected his faith in God. He was still a man of strong faith.

The last time he was able to talk to me was about a week ago and he could only say one word at a time. He was not conscious most of that time, but then he was and I asked if he felt better and he said, "Yes." I asked a couple other questions that he answered, "Yes." Then I said, "Bill, I know you are trusting in God." and he said clearly, "Yes." Then I said, "Goodbye, Bill." and he said, "Bye." His faith remained strong to the end.

His concern for others will never be forgotten. A week ago Thursday, which was the last day that he received any nourishment, I stopped by for a brief visit and he was sitting in his recliner leaning back. I shook hands with him and even though he was weak, he still had that firm handshake. I asked him how he was feeling and he replied, "Better today, but I want to know how you are." He knew I had been having some trouble with my back. That was an example of his concern for others.

4. We also receive much comfort from promises in God's word. Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." He also said: "Because I live, ye shall live also." Bill believed this and this gives us assurance concerning him. We are thankful for the confidence that he is no longer suffering but is in the presence of our Lord, where he shall dwell forevermore.
5. Finally, we are grateful that God is present with us to provide the comfort and strength that we need. Although we are frail in our humanity, we are strong in the Lord.

I want to close with words and scripture given to me by Joan, which is as follows:

Joan said: "My Bill is a valiant man, strong in the Lord to the end. God's grace was sufficient for him."

His favorite Bible verse was Micah 6:8. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

Others that were favorites:

Isaiah 26:3-4, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." "Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength:"

Romans 8:28-30. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."■