



IN MEMORIAM

William Benbow Thompson
Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology
Irvine
1923– 2003

William Benbow Thompson, Jr. M.D. was born July 16, 1923 in Detroit, Michigan, son of Ben Sr. and Ruth. He and his family returned to California when he was an infant. Upon graduation from University High School he enrolled at the University of Southern California where his parents had met as members of the class of 1912. His education at USC was interrupted by World War II where he served in the Pacific from 1942 to 1944. He contracted malaria and received a medical discharge in 1944, whereupon he returned to USC. He then graduated from USC with his bachelor's degree in 1947 and doctor of medicine in 1951. His residency in obstetrics and gynecology was taken at George Washington University, and he initiated his teaching career at Louisiana State University in 1954 where he met a lovely young nurse, Jane Gilliland, who would become his wife of 45 years. He returned to California in 1956 and served on the faculty at UCLA while in private practice with his father, Ben Sr., who was an eminent obstetrics and gynecology physician in West Los Angeles.

In 1964, he accepted a position in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the UC Irvine College of Medicine. While at UCI, he served at variously as director of gynecology, vice chairman, and associate dean. He invented several surgical instruments which bear his name. However, his most notable role was that of teacher of young physicians. He was "Dr. Dependable" ... always ready, willing and able to help in the operating room and on the wards. His unassuming manner made him very approachable for advice to the residents and younger faculty. There will not be another Benbow for a long time, if ever. A fitting quote to his passion for teaching would be:

"No bubble is so iridescent or floats longer than that blown by the successful teacher."
-- Sir William Osler (1849-1919)

Ben is survived by his devoted wife, Jane; sister, Nancy; and brother, Locke; as well as children Reese and Belinda, being preceded in death by his eldest son, William Benbow Thompson IV. He derived great pleasure from his six grandchildren: Rusty, Locke, Ian and Rebecca Thompson and Joseph and Hannah Albanese.

Thomas J. Garite, M.D.