

## The Legacy of Harold Willis Kohl III

Loretta DiPietro

Milken Institute School of Public Health, The George Washington University, Washington, DC, USA

Our hearts had another huge hole blown right through them. It is with deep sadness that we say goodbye to another pillar of our Physical Activity in Public Health (PAPH) community, Harold W. (Bill) Kohl III. I first met Bill Kohl in 1986 at the Society for Epidemiologic Research (SER) meeting in Pittsburgh, PA. The two of us, along with Andrea Kriska and I-Min Lee, were the original four graduate students being trained as epidemiologists (not exercise physiologists) in order to study the benefits of exercise to population health. Over the next 38 years, our careers tracked very closely and we developed a strong professional and personal bond. In fact, we were the academic equivalent of an “old married couple” who knew exactly what the other was thinking before they spoke. Now I have to speak of him in the past tense.

Bill had a marked impact on public health science and practice, as well as on future global public health policy pertaining to physical activity. His legacy is deep and far-reaching in scope. Indeed, there are few academicians in our sub-field who can match his accomplishments in both the science and practice of public health. From his time at the Cooper Institute to the Centers for Disease Control to the University of Texas, Bill paved the way for the rest of us. You will no doubt read in the coming days and months a long list of his professional accomplishments that reflect the national and international impact of his work. Perhaps his greatest feat was his founding of the International Society for Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH), which began as a simple idea about the need to promote physical activity within the global public health arena. Bill, who was ISPAH’s first president, took this idea and transformed it into the Society, which has now grown to a large global organization that will host its 10th International Congress this Fall in Paris. Then there was his work

with the Global Observatory for Physical Activity (GoPA!), the Physical Activity Network of the Americas (RAFA-PANA), the Brazilian Physical Activity Network and Society (SBAFS), the Colombian Physical Activity Network (REDCOLAF), the US National Physical Activity Plan and US Physical Activity Alliance, and the Physical Activity in Public Health (PAPH) course hosted by the University of South Carolina. His newest venture is the planning of a Peer Review Academy with the *Journal of Physical Activity and Health* (on which he served as a Co-Editor-in-Chief from 2007 to 2011) and ISPAH for mentoring early career investigators. Bill’s influence and reach continues to be present everywhere within our field. Like the cream of mushroom soup in a casserole, he had a gift for bringing diverse ingredients together and making the collective much stronger, sustainable, and tastier than any single element.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Bill was an exceptional human being who was an absolute pleasure to work with. He didn’t care where you were from or what stage of your career you were in—everyone was spoken to as if they were the smartest and only other person on the planet. I know from experience that few people of his stature have that ability to make others feel as though their ideas have equal merit to their own. I feel quite privileged (as do countless others) to have had the chance to share my thoughts, ideas, plans, tragedies, and joys with Bill over these many years. I am feeling a bit lost right now. It doesn’t seem right to lose Bill so soon after the passing of Steve Blair. Both of these legends in our field were remarkable men who have enriched so many of our careers and our lives. May we all continue to rely on and prosper from Bill’s insights and keen vision, as well as his grace, humility, and generosity. Rest in peace Darlin’.