

William R. Miller, CBE, KStJ, MA, DCS (h.c.), DMA (b.c.) (1928-2020), Honorary Fellow

I first met Bill Miller in 2004, a year after I became Chancellor of the University. He was a major benefactor to the building named after him, close to the London Road which I had been asked to open. It provided accommodation for more than 50 members of the Hall to which, over 30 years or more, he was the most generous lifetime donor. Bill and his wife Irene, who predeceased him, were always charming company. He had a smile as wide as the High Street. He was kind, interesting and passionate about the University and about his own College, to which he believed that he owed so much. In her final years, Bill showed great loving kindness to Irene, usually taking her with him to College and University functions whenever he could.

Bill had read PPE at Oxford, graduating in 1952. He joined the pharmaceutical industry and rose to become Vice-Chairman of Bristol-Myers Squibb, based in America, but with worldwide responsibilities, not least for research. He was recognised as one of the leaders of the pharmaceutical industry, taking senior positions in its professional organisations.

Overall, he gave £4.4 million to St Edmund Hall while at the same time being a generous philanthropist to other causes, particularly the arts and music. Music had been one of his interests at Oxford, where as a student he was a member of the University Bach Choir and the College Music Society and Singing Club. He also gave a great deal of support to the English-Speaking Union of the United States, of which he was Chairman, to the American Fund for Westminster Abbey and to the St Paul's Cathedral Trust in America. For these and other generous contributions, he was appointed an Officer of the British Empire by HM The Queen in 2000 and a CBE in 2011. But obviously we remember him above all for what he did for the Hall and the University. He supported several tutorial fellowships, scholarships and building projects. It was not surprising that he was elected an Honorary Fellow of the Hall.

Bill also supported the wider University. He served for many years on the Board of Americans for Oxford, for some time as Vice-Chairman. As might be expected, he became a member of the Court of Benefactors and was named a Distinguished Friend of Oxford.

On almost every visit that I made as Chancellor to the United States, particularly if I was visiting New York, I hugely enjoyed his cheerful company. He was invariably positive and helpful and followed events in St Edmund Hall and in the University with close interest and sympathy. He was the perfect alumnus. A lovely man, he was the greatest advertisement for an education at the Hall and at the University of Oxford. Over the years, the Colleges and the University have been built in part by people like Bill Miller. Oxford, as a whole, should be proud of him.

**The Rt Hon the Lord Patten of Barnes, CH,
*Chancellor of the University and College Visitor***