

APPRECIATION

CARING FOR PATIENTS — AND THEIR WORLD

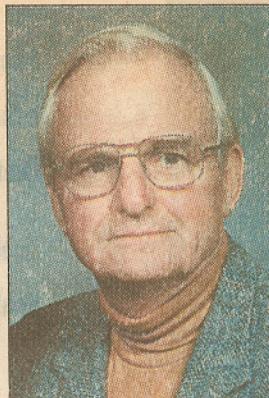
Littleton's Dr. Edgar Bell left legacy in medicine, conservation, charity

By CATHY JOHNSTON
Sun Correspondent

LITTLETON — Whether he was checking up on a patient, working for the needy or fighting to preserve open space, Dr. Edgar D. Bell Jr. left a lasting mark on the community.

Bell, who died at his home Saturday at age 81, kept a busy schedule, not only in his more than four decades of caring for patients, but also in family and community affairs. His son, Samuel Bell of Littleton, said he was one of a dwindling number of "country doctors" who continued to make occasional house calls.

"It's funny how things stick out in your mind from childhood, but for a long time I always thought babies were born at 4 a.m. on Sunday



Dr. Edgar D. Bell Jr.
... "a gentleman"

mornings," Samuel recalled yesterday. "I remember him leaving the house, and dad would come home and say it was a girl or a boy, and all is fine."

Bell is survived by his wife of over 50 years, Dr. Ellen Bell, also a physician, who worked with the Littleton schools and is also active in the community.

Bell was a founder in 1954, along with doctors Henry Harvey and Donald Boardman, of Acton Medical Associates, which now has offices in Acton, Littleton, Harvard and Maynard. He retired in 1990.

Please see **BELL/16**

Bell worked for patients, environment

BELL/From Page 13

"Being a doctor was a vocation for him," Samuel said. "He had his ideals, and he took time and listened to his patients."

He also served on the Littleton Board of Health for many years, and was its chairman numerous times.

Peter Cassinari, a member of the Littleton Board of Health, spoke fondly of his friend, describing him as a quiet person who did much behind the scenes for any worthwhile cause.

"Dr. Bell was a gentleman in every sense of the word," Cassinari said.

Bell will also be remembered for his dedication to conservation, serving as a trustee of the Littleton Conservation Trust, which he helped to found, and working to save open space and woodlands.

Cassinari said Bell was one of the leading forces in acquiring land for the town of Littleton. "I'd like to see him honored for his most recent venture, the Community Gardens on Newtown Hills," Cassinari said.

On the Shade Tree Committee, Bell experimented with ways to prevent Dutch elm disease and ash blight.

Bell was also active in the schools. Five years ago, he implemented Nashoba Valley

Reads, a program at the Page-Hilltop Elementary School in Ayer. He enlisted adult volunteers to read to kindergarten students for six weeks at a time in the spring and fall, said Helen Jean Harris, Page-Hilltop's librarian.

Bell was also a key supporter of the Loaves and Fishes program, which provides food, clothing and other necessities for needy families in Ayer, Shirley, Harvard, Littleton, Groton and Devens.

Rev. Philip Goff, pastor of the Federated Church in Ayer, who oversees the program, described Bell as an extraordinary man who was always concerned for others. Goff said Bell trained stewards in the loaves and fishes program to look for health issues among those seeking help.

"Dr. Bell was very outgoing, a friend to everyone, and exhibited humanity far beyond being a doctor," Goff said. "He embraced all."

Besides his wife, Bell leaves five children, Thomas Bell of Lake Oswego, Ore., James Bell of Berlin; Samuel Bell of Littleton; Sarah Bell and Richard Bell, both of Cambridge; as well as 10 grandchildren.

Visiting hours are tomorrow at the First Church Unitarian on Foster Street in Littleton, from 2 to 4 and 7 to 9 p.m. A memorial service will be held at the church on Dec. 22 at 10 a.m.