

George S. Bascom, M.D. (1927 – 1993)

George Bascom was born in Richmond, Virginia, October 26, 1927, the second of four sons of a physician and an active, creative mother. His earliest recollections were of Minot, North Dakota, where his father practiced for five years before moving to Manhattan, Kansas, in 1936.

Dr. Bascom spent what he describes as “one undistinguished year in the Army as a dental technician and football player and graduated from Kansas State University in 1948 with high honors. I was a Rhodes Scholar candidate that year but was eliminated in the final competition.”

Graduating from Harvard Medical School in 1953, he was a member of the Boylston Society — he gave a paper on the influence of medicine on Sir Thomas Browne, Francois Rabelais, and Anton Chekhov — and the Aesculapian Club — where he contributed to what he calls a “bawdy class show.”

Dr Bascom spent four years at Yale University as a surgical resident interrupted by a year at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston as a fellow in surgery studying the metabolic effects of massive burns. His final year in training was as a senior resident in surgery at the Denver Veterans Administration Hospital.

The surgeon/poet and his wife, Jane, arrived in Manhattan, Kansas, in July 1958 with five small sons. He practiced surgery there since that time. He has been honored by Kansas State University for distinguished service in health, as well as by the Mental Health Association, the Sertoma Club, and the SPEBSQSA locally.

In 1987, he received the Unsung Hero Award from the Harvard Medical Alumni Association, “for reasons still beyond my comprehension,” he says. He was invited to read his poetry at the Alumni Day Convocation at the Harvard Medical School in 1987 and served on the fifteen-member Harvard Medical Alumni Council.

Dr. Bascom says, “I first heard the music in Shakespeare in a dark auditorium in Topeka as a high school student, first wrote a little poem as a grade schooler, but began to work at it more or less seriously as a college student. Hormones had a lot to do with it then. As the years have gone by, I have sometimes experienced a stab of profound pleasure when a poem emerges, a pleasure different from, but no less keen than, the excitement of youth. When life strikes a blow of irresistible force or offers a joy both gratuitous and intense, I find a poem may be the only adequate response. Family life with its joys — nine lovely grandchildren — and its tragedies — the death of a sixteen-year-old son — and the professional life of surgery have been rich in both satisfactions and sorrows.”

George Bascom died of prostate cancer on August 7, 1993.