

# Remembering Brian Bates

**O**n December 23, we lost one of our great leaders, mentors, and dear friends. **Brian Bates** succumbed after a courageous 18-month battle with ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig's disease) while at his home in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

There are few moments in time when we have the opportunity to recognize the cumulative and significant contributions of any one individual in our organization. Now is one of those moments.

## Career at Cook

Brian's career with Cook spanned more than four decades. Brian graduated from Eastern Michigan University. He began his professional career working at Stanford Medical Center in the cardiology department doing pharmacological research. In November of 1971, at an American Heart Association meeting, he met two members of Cook leadership, **Ross Jennings** and **Miles Kanne**, who then organized an interview for Brian in Bloomington with Bill Cook. With no sales experience, Brian was hired as Cook's fourth sales representative, covering the US west coast region, in January of 1972. Bill asked him to move to Bloomington in 1974 to help support a growing sales force and to begin evolving a product development program. He was promoted to vice president of product development in the early 1980s and served on the Cook Incorporated board of directors. At the time of his retirement, six years ago, Brian held the position of senior vice president of new business development.



Dr. Al Rutner, left, and Brian.



Brian in his wheelchair and next to his tracker during his battle with ALS.

## Product development

Brian's impact was immense. He was thoughtful, creative, focused, meticulous, and had high expectations for himself and those around him. He also understood the value of humor. These traits served him well. Bill once said of his abilities, "Brian was methodical but very inventive and creative. He can recognize a new product in a minute... identify a new product as having potential or not having potential." Assessing new technology, Brian's ability to recognize opportunity and to develop and foster relationships with clinical thought leaders led to many product innovations. He worked with some of the greatest pioneering minds in interventional medicine, including the likes of Dotter, Gianturco, Ring, Cope, Amplatz, Rösch, Russell, White, Katzen, Chuter, Greenberg, Wallace, Thal, Roubin, and Rutner. The list could go on and on. Much of our product offering today was made possible by Brian's collective work in product development. He was responsible for helping Cook enter many new markets by serving new specialties of medicine and patients through product development, including critical care, urology, cardiology, and vascular surgery.

Perhaps his proudest achievement was leading Cook's development efforts to introduce the first coronary stent to the US market, the Gianturco-Roubin Flex-Stent, in 1993. This was an amazing time in Cook's history that paved the way for millions of patients around the world to be treated by stent technology rather than open coronary bypass surgery. He also led the effort by Cook to secure the right to use the drug paclitaxel on stent technology.

Interventional medicine has been changed forever through Brian's passion and commitment to develop important technology for clinicians to better treat their patients.

This work was not done in a vacuum, of course, and Brian was supported by many within Cook to accomplish this important work.

## Outside interests

Away from work Brian was into big game hunting, fishing, skeet shooting, and golf, and he was an expert woodworker. He loved tackling major projects both at work and at his homes in Bloomington and Michigan on Lake Walloon. He exhausted the day with activity.

Brian was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather. He leaves behind his beloved wife of 47 years Gail; his daughter, Amy, and her husband, Matt; and two grandchildren.

## Lasting impact

I feel fortunate to have called Brian my friend for the last 38 years. I will always remember his smile, his wit, his passion, and the many great times we had together not only working together in Bloomington, but also at the many meetings, dinners, and adventures I had with him around the world. Brian once said during an interview regarding his experience of being hired by Bill Cook, "I've never looked back. I always had a comfort level that Cook would have a strong position. I had a great deal of confidence in Bill as a leader, as an entrepreneur, when I first met him. I saw a fearlessness."

We should all be thankful that Brian "never looked back." He helped to shape our culture and provided tremendous leadership to establish Cook as the company that was listening to the needs of clinicians at a time when interventional and minimally invasive medicine was being defined.

He will be missed. Rest in peace, my friend.

*Written by Rick Mellinger, Vice President of Global Advertising and Promotion Compliance*



Brian and Tom Osborne.



From left: Brian, Ann Williams, Gail Bates, and Jerry Williams at the 2010 Annual Employee Awards Banquet, where Bill Cook honored Cook's "First Team" members.