



Frank Joseph BIEHL: Recollections of a Dear Friend

It is with great sadness that the occupational therapy community learned of Frank Biehl's passing on May 17, 2014, at age 88. He was a friend to all of us, a big man not only in physical stature, but in his generous and commanding presence. When Frank walked into a room, his quiet smile and warm manner filled the room. Frank was the founder of North Coast Medical. The following is a tribute to Frank J. Biehl from the CFOT, based on the recollections of a dear friend.

My personal recollections are of many visits together over the years at both OTAC and AOTA conferences. Frank and his lovely wife, Lori, and I often had dinner together and visited about children, travels, and in later years about grandchildren, and their retirement years. I was flooded with memories of my visits with the Biehls. They were always avid supporters of CFOT. North Coast Medical donated the Grand Prize for the first CFOT fundraising Raffle in 1983!

Also, I remember so well that evening at the OTAC Conference in San Diego in 1984 when Frank and I were walking back from the Exhibit Hall and I talked about the CFOT scholarship drive. Right then and there he handed me a check for our fund. When I approached him about a specific "North Coast Scholarship", he was generous and enthusiastic. The CFOT established the first named graduate student scholarship as the "North Coast Medical Scholarship". The first North Coast Medical Scholarship awardee was Linda Gibney, from USC, in 1985. Subsequently, North Coast Medical has funded two CFOT student scholarships annually.

During our walk together so many years ago in San Diego, Frank had told me about his company and his strong philosophy of "giving back" to the organizations and people that made his company a success. He was a pioneer in his support for people with disabilities. His early employment of disabled workers in very meaningful activities for the company was unusual at that time. It was not a "sheltered workshop" in the traditional sense, as was the custom then, but an integral part of the company's jobs. I believe his shipping foreman was a disabled worker. North Coast Medical forged a strong and nurturing relationship with HOPE Rehabilitation, built on the founding principle "to help people experiencing difficulties in daily living flourish in their everyday environments".

It was these stories that Frank related that inspired me to start the CFOT HUMANITARIAN AWARD. Frank and Lori Biehl were our first awardees of the CFOT Humanitarian Award, in 1994. They epitomized the principles that formed the criteria for the award: to honor individuals or groups who, through their humanitarian activities have demonstrated exceptional commitment to the philosophical principles of occupational therapy.

Frank and **Loretta Biehl** founded **North Coast Medical** in 1974, dedicated to humanitarian core values and commitment to community. They had a basic desire: to help therapists gain access to state-of-the art products to enhance their practice, and to provide opportunities for advancement for all their employees, regardless of skill level or abilities.

Frank and **Loretta (Lori) Biehl**, were fondly known as Mr. and Mrs. B at the company, and even in their retirement they still kept a steady pulse on the business. The Biehl's have maintained the feeling of "community" and "family" among their employees throughout the almost four decades of business. **North Coast Medical** is still a family-owned and operated company, led by President and CEO, **Mark E. Biehl**, Frank and Lori's youngest son and the first employee of **North Coast** in 1979. Mark's entrepreneurial spirit leads his staff of highly motivated Division Managers and employees, dedicated to Frank and Lori's original humanitarian core values. Employee contributions along with North Coast's matching funds have enabled thousands of dollars to be sent to Katrina victims as well as those affected by the Japanese earthquake and tsunami.

North Coast Medical has maintained their commitment to helping students further their education through the funding of scholarships. **Lori and Mark Biehl have asked that those who wish to pay tribute to Frank's life, do so by donating to CFOT. CFOT is establishing a permanent "The Frank J. Biehl, Opportunity Scholarship" in memory of Frank, who gave so much to occupational therapists everywhere. Mark said that "Providing opportunity for others, that is what my father was all about".**

Please join us with your generous donations to this special scholarship in honor of this special man.
www.cfot.org.

Evie Jaffe, MPH, OTR, FAOTA
President Emeritus, CFOT

Please send donations to Sue Knox, Treasurer of CFOT,
3458 La Sombra Drive
Hollywood, CA 90068
Phone: 323-851-5485

There is a lovely video on "YOU Tube" of Frank and Lori with Mark visiting new headquarters in Gilroy, 2011:



[North Coast Medical welcomes Frank and Loretta Biehl to the new Gilroy location, 2011.](#)

Funeral Notice

Frank Joseph BIEHL

Was born to Josephine and Frank E. Biehl in Wilkensburg, Pennsylvania on December 29, 1926 and died in Santa Rosa, California May 17, 2014. One of six children, Frank grew up in Pittsburgh, graduated from South Hills High School in 1944. At the age of 17 Frank joined the Navy and served as a medical corpsman on air-craft carriers USS ROI and USS Badoeng Strait in the South Pacific during [World War II](#). A member of SIGMA CHI fraternity, Frank graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 1949. An entrepreneur and pioneer in the development and sales of products for the medical, occupational, hand therapy, and physical therapy fields, Frank worked as a sales representative for Wyandotte Chemical in 1954, Behr-Manning in 1957, and Baxter Laboratories in 1959, where he helped introduce the newly developed artificial lung and kidney dialysis machines across the country. In 1963, Frank and his family relocated to Saratoga, California when he was promoted to West Coast District Manager for Travenol Laboratories. In 1974, Frank and Loretta started North Coast Medical, now a leading supplier for the occupational and physical therapy professions. Frank Joseph Biehl is survived by his wife of nearly 64 years, Loretta Biehl and five sons, ten grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. **No services will be held and in lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the California Foundation for Occupational Therapy, www.cfot.org.**

Published Online in the Press Democrat from June 1 to June 2, 2014

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