



Harlan Fred Ellis, MD

August 5, 1925 - November 27, 2021

Harlan Ellis passed away peacefully on November 27, 2021.

He was greatly loved by family, friends and community.

He was part of the "Greatest Generation" who fought in World War II. He served in the U.S. Navy in the Atlantic as an Officer aboard the USS Courage. Its mission as a Corvette Submarine Chaser was to escort ship convoys delivering needed food and supplies to our Allied Forces in Europe.

At war's end he attended the University of California at Berkeley, graduating in 1948. He started his medical practice in the Los Angeles in 1952 area after receiving his medical degree from the California College of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons.

After reading Dr. Grantley Dick Read's book *Childbirth Without Fear* he changed the way he was delivering babies and by 1955 he had set up a natural childbirth program for his patients. By 1958 he was regularly including husbands in the training and having them present during both labor and the birth.

In 1961 he received a private grant for research on the topic: "What is the potential of the newborn?" The study included all factors from conception to

the age of nine months.

In 1962 he received his M.D. from the University of California at Irvine. In 1963 he was board certified in California in OB/Gyn. In 1965 he was accepted as a Fellow in the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. From 1958 to 1968 he taught at the Los County Hospital in the areas of OB Anesthesia, Cesarean Sections and Vaginal Breech Deliveries. At the same time he was Assistant Clinical Professor of OB/Gyn at the University of California Irvine.

During these years Harlan received recognition from all over the country for his unique approach to childbirth.

In 1965 he made national news when speaking at USC. He was quoted as saying that prepared husbands can actually make labor shorter and birthing easier. He suggested that a family-centered maternity hospital which provided psychological preparation for childbirth might decrease the infant mortality rate in the U.S.

In 1968 he moved to Visalia with his wife, Betty, (deceased) and their 5 children and 4 Great Danes. Here he continued the practice of Natural Childbirth he had begun in LA. He established a unique birthing center that promoted education for the expectant couple including the father in the delivery room. It was the beginning of "Natural Childbirth" in the San Joaquin valley, birthing and bonding with the newborn, and an emphasis on breast feeding.

For the rest of his career Dr. Ellis continued to practice the Natural Childbirth approach stressing the value of: (1) educating parents, (2) providing specially trained labor coaches to work with each laboring couple and nursing staff and (3) Newborn/Maternal Bonding as being of the utmost importance in prevention of aggression and violence in our society.

In 1969 Mira Rondeau arrived from Poland as an Exchange Student and promptly became a part of the family. Harlan became her American father.

In 1972 he became the Co-Editor of the 3rd, 4th and 5th Editions of Childbirth Without Fear .

In 1979 Harlan's son, Bob, and his friend, Jimmy Heisler decided to set up Jimmy's mother, Joan Heisler, with Harlan on a blind date! It was a success that led to their marriage. Joan passed away in 2005.

Before his retirement in 1996, not one to sit back on his laurels, he obtained his Wyoming medical license to relieve his son, Dr Robert Ellis OB, in Powell, WY when Bob needed to take a vacation.

Harlan had many and varied hobbies, including water and snow skiing, antique puzzle collecting, of which he had a showing and presentation at the Fresno Museum, tennis, ping pong, games of all sorts, magic shows. He especially delighted in performing magic shows for children.

Harlan's love for bridge led him to Marcie Buford. Thanks to his (planned) spilling of ice water on her that led to their first date. They were married on February 2, 2009 (Groundhog day as he informed her on the way out of the church). They enjoyed many good times together, including Harlan's achieving ACBL Life Master (Bridge), lots of travel, and the joy of dinners with their combined families.

He leaves behind a large, loving family. At his last counting he had 15 children and too many grandchildren and great grandchildren to enumerate here.

A Funeral service will be held at St Mary's Catholic Church, 608 N. Church St.
Visalia
on January 15, 2022 at 12 noon.

A Celebration of Life will follow at the Visalia Country Club, 625 N. Ranch St.
Visalia at approximately 1:30 PM.

In lieu of flowers please send donations to your favorite charity, or the Building
Fund of either:
Gateway church, 1100 S. Sowell St. Visalia or St. Charles Borromeo Church,
506 N Garden St, Visalia.

Services have been entrusted to Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel. Memorial
Tributes and condolences may be offered by logging onto www.salseranddillard.com.

Previous Events

Memorial Mass

JAN 15. 12:00 PM (PT)

St. Mary's Catholic Church - Visalia, CA
608 N. Church Street
Visalia, CA 93291

Tribute Wall



“ *Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel created a Tribute Video in memory of Harlan Fred Ellis, MD*



Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel - January 07, 2022 at 05:26 PM

NL

“ Dear Marcy and Family,



I am sorry to hear of the death of Harlan in November. I feel privileged to have known him through his friendship with my dad, Bud Erickson. My father often spoke about their bridge games together along with dinners at the club and other Visalia restaurants. Harlan was so personable. I loved visiting with him about a myriad of issues, and particularly loved our discussions about the importance of newborn bonding. He was so passionate about that. I was privy to see his many puzzles and exhibit at the Fresno Metropolitan Museum of Art, and was quite taken when Harlan gave me a 3-D puzzle of New York City to share with my students at school. Though highly intellectual and with many talents, Harlan was a humble man with a sweet spirit. I will never forget the wonderful times I had being around him and what a good friend he was to my father.

I regret having to miss his service on January 15th. I would have driven over from Santa Cruz, but it is the same day as my mother-in-law's (age 101) memorial service in Bakersfield. She also passed away in November.

*Sincerely,
Nancy Erickson Lewis*

Nancy Lewis - January 10, 2022 at 04:32 PM

JM

“ Harlan and Joan were our neighbors for many years. Harlan was a down-to-earth, easy-going, gentle man who welcomed us to the neighborhood as soon as we moved in. He invited us to use his pool while ours was being built. Harlan loved our great dane and offered to care for her whenever we were away. He would often stand at the back fence talking to the dog or ring our doorbell and ask to play with her! Our condolences go out to his entire family.

Joanie Muse and family

Joanie Muse - January 10, 2022 at 04:00 PM

CC

“ I am so saddened to learn of Dr Harlan Ellis' passing. Truly a pioneer in natural childbirth, and a never ending advocate of women, babies and families having a shared and healthy birth experience, he revolutionized childbirth education in this area through his birthing program at Visalia Community Hospital. I was so very blessed to have two of my four children birthed under his care with absolutely no need for medication, and to be cared for by him during every one of my four pregnancies. May Creator welcome him and bless and comfort his family, and may his spirit know that he was loved, thought of, and appreciated undoubtedly by thousands of women giving birth throughout the many, many years of his practice. Thank you for the amazing doctor and human being that you were, Dr. Ellis. You made a difference in the lives of countless birthing women, babies, and their families.



Cathy L Cory-Rodriguez - January 10, 2022 at 01:47 AM