



In Memory of William “Bill” Richlen, PT, WCC, DWC (February 10, 1970–April 26, 2024)

A Legacy of Passion, Purpose, and People

This month, NAWCO honors the memory of Bill Richlen, a beloved educator, clinician, and mentor who passed away in 2024. Bill left an indelible mark on the wound care community through his passion for healing, commitment to teaching, and unwavering dedication to helping others live better, healthier lives.

Bill’s career in healthcare began after earning his Physical Therapy degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1994. He quickly found a calling in long-term care, where a shortage of wound care nurses opened the door for him to step in—not only to provide physical therapy but also to prevent and treat wounds. In 2003, Bill earned his WCC certification, followed by his DWC, formalizing his deep commitment to wound care.

But Bill's true gift was teaching. He became the first instructor hired by the Wound Care Education Institute (WCEI) and spent more than two decades traveling the country, educating thousands of clinicians. With a booming voice and magnetic energy, Bill inspired his students to push boundaries, sharpen their critical thinking, and never settle for mediocrity. He had an exceptional way of connecting with people, often becoming a mentor and lifelong supporter of those he taught.

Together with his wife Denise Richlen, Bill co-founded Wound Care Gurus, a national consulting and education firm. Dubbed the “Mr. and Mrs. Smith of Wound Care,” the pair became known for their dynamic teaching and impactful seminars. Bill’s specialty was sharp debridement, and he was revered for his deep clinical insight and ability to break down complex topics

with clarity and humor. Denise continues their shared mission, teaching across the country and carrying on the legacy they built together.

Bill was more than an instructor—he was a lifelong learner and a fierce advocate for doing what’s best for the patient. He constantly explored new treatment methods and loved discussing clinical reasoning with colleagues, always asking the most important question: "Is this the right thing for the patient?" He lived by the philosophy that “iron sharpens iron”—always pushing himself and those around him to be better.

Beyond his professional achievements, Bill was a devoted father, husband, and friend, whose larger-than-life presence brought energy and warmth to every room. He was a bodybuilder, a storyteller, a motivator, and a deeply compassionate human being who changed lives every day.

Please join NAWCO in remembering Bill Richlen, a remarkable clinician, educator, and leader. We are proud that he chose NAWCO for his certifications, and we extend our deepest gratitude to Denise Richlen, who continues to teach, mentor, and inspire the next generation of wound care professionals in his honor.

William “Bill” Richlen

1970–2024

Forever in our hearts, always part of our story.