

Senator C. William (Bill) Nelson

Florida/Yale '65 • Oxford Cup Roll No. 069



The Honorable Bill Nelson, *Florida/Yale '65*, born and raised in the Sunshine State on September 29, 1942, currently serves as a Senator for the State of Florida. Nelson was born in Miami to Nannie and Clarence Nelson, and he attended public school in Melbourne. Senator Nelson enrolled at the University of Florida but eventually transferred and graduated from Yale University in 1965, and he later earned his law degree from the University of Virginia in 1968. While in college, Nelson joined the Reserved Officers' Training Corps (ROTC). He then served in the reserves and as an active duty member for the U.S. Army from 1965 to 1971, where he rose to the rank of Captain. In 1968, Senator Nelson was admitted to the Florida Bar, and he began practicing Law in Melbourne in 1970.

Bill Nelson and his wife Grace wed in 1972. They have two children, Bill Nelson, Jr. and Nan Ellen Nelson. In the same year Bill and Grace married, Nelson was elected to the Florida House of Representatives, and he was reelected in 1974 and 1976. During these three terms, Senator Nelson created the nation's first law that protected consumers from computer fraud.

From 1979 to 1991, Brother Nelson served as a Representative in the U.S. House of Representatives. During this tenure, Nelson became the second member of Congress to fly into space. He took flight from January 12-18, 1986 on Space Shuttle Columbia's STS-61-C Mission as a Payload Specialist, spending a total of 6 days, 2 hours, and 3 minutes in space. While in space, the

seven-man crew deployed the SATCOM KU satellite and performed experiments related to materials processing and astrophysics. Senator Nelson joins three other members of Beta Theta Pi who have flown in space: Joseph P. Allen, *DePauw* '59, Kenneth D. Cameron, *MIT* '71, and Paul J. Weitz, *Penn State* '54.

From 1994 to 2000, Nelson served the Sunshine State's Cabinet as state Treasurer, Insurance Commissioner, and Fire Marshal. While in office, he fought to keep insurance rates affordable for homeowners, investigated life and burial insurance sales abuses against the elderly and minorities, and demanded European insurers to honor settling payments to Holocaust-era victims.

In 2000, Senator Nelson won the Florida Democratic seat in the U.S. Senate. Currently serving in this position, Brother Nelson is a member of the following committees: U.S. Senate Armed Services, Budget, Commerce, Finance, Intelligence, and Aging. Within these committees, Senator Nelson is the Chairman of the Emerging Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee and Chairman of the Science and Space subcommittee. He is also recognized as the leading congressional expert on NASA.

Some issues Brother Nelson worked on as a Senator include: preventing identity theft for consumers, creating legislation to stop unsolicited e-mails to individuals and businesses, and working with men and women in the armed forces to ensure their proper equipment needs were met. Senator Nelson also fought to prevent drilling for oil off Florida's coast, worked to defend war veterans' quality health care, and ensured proper Medicare benefits for senior citizens. Nelson also saw to it that victims from the 2004 hurricane season were well taken care of with sufficient federal financial aid. This also prompted him to take an integral role in reforming the federal agency that assists people after disasters occur.

Currently, Senator Nelson is employing efforts to prevent major disruptions in life and economics to Florida citizens due to the 2010 BP oil spill off the coast of Louisiana.