

William J. Troutman

U.S. Army
Specialist 5th Class – Artillery



Good Conduct Medal	National Defense Service Medal
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Say His Name

Say His Name

The life and stories of
Bill Troutman



Twin, Brother, Soldier, Husband, Artist, Uncle,
Volunteer, Builder, Sportsman, Friend

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1. Say His Name

According to Jewish tradition everyone dies twice. The first time is when the heart stops beating, and the synapses in the brain shut down, like a city during a blackout. The second time is when the dead person's name is uttered, read or thought of for the last time, after fifty or hundred or four hundred years. Only then, is the person really gone, erased from life on Earth.

If we care about someone, we shouldn't let that person slip away without marking his life in some way. We need to say his name.

Even after Bill's Homegoing service which included 5 eulogies, I realized there is so much more to Bill's life story. This is an attempt to fill in some of those spaces and keep his memory alive.

I have heard him called "Troutman, Billy, Willie, Willie Joe, Wild Bill, Uncle Bill, Brother Bill, Grandpa Bill, Sergeant Bill." To me, he was just Bill.

One of my many regrets is that I didn't spend time, writing *Bill's Story* when he was alive. I heard him retell his experiences many times, but I guess I just thought I would remember them.

He's gone and with him, his personality, his humor, his stories.

Bill wasn't necessarily special. Certainly, men have accomplished more, become more famous, built better, learned more, written or spoken more eloquently.

However, Bill was special--to me.

To make him live a bit longer, I have recounted Bill's life--as much as I can remember.

I am grateful to my brother, Stan, who spent hours transporting photos, lining up text, aligning documents, and offering suggestions. Without him, the book would never come to fruition. Thank you, Stan.

2. Childhood

“In the symphony of life, childhood memories compose the sweetest melodies, resonating with the purest notes of happiness.”

Anonymous

Personally, I don't know that much about Bill's youth. Although we attended the same grade school, Custer City, he was older and we lived ten miles apart. I'm sure he didn't notice me, but I remember seeing Bill and Ben because they often dressed alike. Probably his mother's idea, but Bill said he didn't mind; he was proud of being a twin.

Although we didn't know each other at the time, the one thing we did have in common during those early years was our artistic bent. It wasn't until many years later, talking about our school experiences, that we realized we had won the same contest. It had something to do with a celebration of firemen. I doubt we had ever seen a fireman, but we drew anyway. Representing the fifth grade, I won a book, *Bobbsey Twins at the Seashore*; Bill won a book as a seventh grader. He doesn't remember the title, but I hope it wasn't a Bobbsey Twins book. They were meant for 5–8-year-olds.



His parents didn't have money for allowances so Bill found little jobs. He collected eggs at a nearby farm. Realizing chickens were not the cleanest, smartest birds, for years Bill refused to eat eggs.

During their teenage years, Bill, Ben, and David spent most of their time hunting, fishing, and trapping in the fall and winter. In the spring and summer, their passion included baseball, softball, and fishing.

The Troutman brothers, being talented players, were recruited by other local teams. Even scouted by a professional farm team. Skilled players, yes, but too small for the big leagues.

Travel for the Troutman family involved visiting nearby relatives' homes. They especially like their Uncle John. One summer he hired the twins to paint his house. The boys were in their glory—working, listening to Uncle John's stories of labor in the oil fields, eating Aunt Maxine's food, and dining on sandwiches and tomato soup prepared by their Grampa Joe. At the end of the project, Uncle John handed them each \$100. They were rich!

Another time the young family visited Aunt May and Uncle Harvey. Mr. Troutman had backed down into the driveway against the garage. Hours later, he realized the temperature had plummeted; the driveway was too slippery for the car to make the slope. Stationing Mrs. Troutman behind the wheel and Corky in the back seat, "the men" spread out behind the car. Having never driven, Mrs. Troutman, unfortunately put the car in reverse. Imagine a man and three little boys, trying to hold back a car with the gas pedal to the floor. She almost lost a husband and three sons that day.



Which is which?

Hunting stories were Bill's favorite.

For instance, when he was a teenager, Bill, Ben, David, and Mr. Troutman went turkey hunting. They were very successful, bagging four turkeys—20, 21, 22, and 23 pounds, totaling 86 pounds. The story appeared in the newspaper. (It was a very small town.)

At another time, Bill skipped school, calling in sick to go hunting. Again, Bill was successful, shooting a buck. He was elated; however, the next morning the principal called him into the office to inquire about his health. Again, hunting was local news. Bill's escapade, complete with photo, had appeared in the newspaper! As hunting was accepted as a major part of rural Pennsylvania living, he didn't get a reprimand--only a handshake.



3. The Forestry

"The clearest way into the universe is through the forest wilderness."

John Muir, Naturalist

After graduating from high school, both Bill and Ben got jobs with the National Forest. Working outside, bonding with other men, managing the woods--Bill was in his element.

One winter the team was instructed to mark timber. That meant, wearing snowshoes, they would spray paint marks on trees to be harvested. At first, the frigid temperatures rendered the spray guns inoperable, but once they warmed up, the men completed the job. In the spring when cutters went back to fell the trees, the spots were so high, the designations were useless. The snow that previous winter had been so deep that the marks were too high on the trees to be accurate. All the trees had to be remarked.



Bill fondest forestry memory was lunch. Yes, these young men had healthy appetites, taking a several sandwiches, every day. For Bill the best part was building a fire, sitting on logs, and trading jokes and jibes, while grilling their

sandwiches. Even in his last years, when Bill went to the Legion, he would order a peanut butter and jelly sandwich—fried. I think he was trying to recreate his forestry lunch experience.

At the forestry he brought home \$1.30 an hour. (His father earned \$1.25 at the brickyard.) Even with this modest income, Bill said he was never broke. The boys did pay \$20 a week room and board. But clothes? no. Dates? no. Entertainment? Maybe a tank of gas and a movie now and then.

Except when it came to cars. Because they often bought items together, (a record player, a revolver for shooting rats), they purchased a (I called it orange; Bill said red) Dodge. However, it wasn't long before they traded in that vehicle for a brand-new cherry red 1963 Chevy Super Sport for the princely sum of \$3600. They were Mario Andretti and Richard Petty. (Later, Dale Earnhardt was Bill's favorite.)

Important to prove one's superiority on the road, they challenged other hot cars. Bill bragged that they always won.



However, it wasn't long before romance changed the lives of these small-town racers. Ben met Chickie and Bill met Elaine.

Ben got married and Bill joined the Army.

4. Young Love

“Young love is a vibrant tapestry of emotions, woven together with the threads of innocence.”

Padre Angelic Master

Yes, I was aware of Bill since grade school, but I never really talked to him until I was seventeen, three days before I graduated from high school.

I had the “very prestigious” job of cashier at the local movie theater. Not the premier one on Main Street. No, the second-run place down the way. Adult tickets were 65 cents; children, a quarter. Where did I sit? Attached to the theater in a 4 by 3-foot booth, accessible only through the men’s room. When I entered or left, an usher had to clear out the lavatory. I got an education in “man-talk” while working there. As other teenagers “flamed the Main” in their cars, I got to watch them longingly through my prime viewing window.

From that vantage point, I recognized the twins, rolling by, first in their Dodge, and later in the Super Sport. Once I remember their coming to the window and buying tickets, then going immediately to the men’s room, right behind me. I doubt any of the guys realized I could hear everything they talked about in there.

Memorial Day weekend, 1963, the carnival came to town, an exciting attraction for bored teenagers. I went with a friend, Barb Gleason. We didn’t have much money so we didn’t buy food, didn’t play any games or buy tickets for rides, but the fun was just walking around, meeting friends and scoping out boys.

Barb, who had driven, had to take a fellow classmate, Kevin Healy, home, leaving me alone. Soon I realized I wasn’t comfortable walking around by myself. I recognized the twins with their friend, John Truby so, uncharacteristic of me, I asked if I could walk around with them. A little embarrassed, I suspect, they admitted they were headed to the burlesque show. Although I was curious, I definitely would never enter that den of inequity. I waited outside.

Once they emerged—they said they were unimpressed; however, I imagine this had been the reason for their attendance at the carnival. Even at 20 years old, I’m sure this was the first time they had seen partially dressed women. If only their mother knew.

The four of us continued our circuit until it was time to leave. They offered me a ride. (Of course, as they came in one car, that meant all of them.) Naïve of any possible problem, I agreed.

Stopping at the South Bradford Dairy Bar in the way home, the boys played a pinball machine. (These lady killers sure knew how to impress a girl. ☺)

When we got back to the car, I turned around and realized I couldn't tell them apart; I didn't know which one had asked to take me home. I figured I would just get in the back seat, and the one that got in with me was the one. At that point it didn't make any difference. To me, at that point, they were the same.

Home safely, but no contact for a week. Unschooled in matters of the heart (Bill never had a date before), he didn't ask for my number. A far cry from the texting of today, most contact was made by just seeing the person riding in a car or walking on the street. I did see Ben downtown that week, but although we spoke briefly, I still didn't know if he was Bill or Ben--a fact I didn't admit to.

So that was the beginning. It wasn't until a week later that Bill figured out how to contact me and asked me for a real date, a stock car race. I scoff at it today, but at the time any venue away from home was exciting. Dating then entailed just riding around town and possibly the surrounding area. And if you found someone with a really cool car, well, that was a bonus. Bill recalls putting 100 miles on the meter--and never left town.

Since Bill worked for the forestry, he knew all the overlooks, trails, and views so most of our time was spent driving on country roads, walking through the woods, or picnicking in parks or along streams. One night all four of us broke into a cemetery to swim in a small creek. I suppose modern couples would laugh at all this now, but sometimes we even went to a dump to watch the bears. All this for the price of a tank of gas. Pretty tame stuff.

Bill and I dated throughout that summer and fall when I started classes at the University of Pittsburgh in Bradford.



We really liked each other, but it was not to last.

Bill got his draft notice in December. We enjoyed Christmas together with our families when I bought him a shirt and sweater, and he gave me a pearl ring.

Two months later, he was gone.

5. The Military

"What I can do for my country, I am willing to do."

Christopher Gadsden, American politician during Revolutionary War

Just twenty-one years old, and oblivious of the perils unfolding in Vietnam, Bill looked forward to future military experiences with his brother. Uncharacteristically, the twins had perhaps the most heated argument of their lives. The end result was a large dent in the car dashboard. Two weeks later, traveling to Buffalo, NY, to sign the official papers, Bill rode the bus alone. Regardless of much coaxing on Bill's part, Ben stayed behind, now married.

Bill underwent his basic training at Fort Dix, NJ, traveling home for a brief two week pass to renew our budding romance.

Our time together melted away, and Bill journeyed to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for artillery training in the 3rd and 79th Army. Expecting to receive the promised pass before his permanent assignment, Bill looked forward to another visit home. Instead, the war heated up; Bill found his orders—"Pack immediately." Half of his division would ship to Germany, half to Vietnam.



As fortune would have it, he was sent to Giessen, Germany. (More about his luck later.) Bill's job was to support the Vietnam war effort by pairing both dynamite and nuclear warheads to fueled missiles. Because he possessed a license to drive a 10-ton truck, Bill was tasked with transporting rockets, called "Honest Johns," cradled on launchers, to Grafenwöhr, Germany, for firing.

Once when his truck was delayed behind another vehicle that couldn't make the steep grade, Bill got left behind. The security jeeps had gone ahead. Unaccustomed to leading, Bill, nevertheless, took charge of the remaining detail and formed a perimeter to protect his dangerous cargo.

As a result of his initiative, Bill was asked to attend warhead school in Oberammergau to train in arming these nuclear warheads, whereby earning the designation of "Senior Assembly Rocket Specialist."

Based on his performance there, his sergeant recommended Bill for the promotion to SP5 E5, a position of which Bill was proud; this was an unusual accomplishment for an enlisted soldier with only 18 months of service.

During his European deployment, he had some free time which he used to travel throughout Europe--Paris, Munich, and Rome. His world became much larger; he was no longer the small-town boy from Lewis Run.

Now a man, he spent evenings in beer gardens where he recalled that he could buy a bockwurst and a "flip top" beer for 1 mark (4 marks in a dollar at that time.)

Another favorite memory was going to a USO show. The female entertainer began her act by acquainting herself with her audience. She called out certain states and finally got to Pennsylvania. Bill raised his hand. Then she called out certain towns. Finally, she got to "Bradford. Anyone from Bradford, Pennsylvania." Bill stood up. She exclaimed, "Send beers to that table." At intermission she came over and introduced herself. She was a Bradford native, born Shirley Neal, but professionally known as Randy Robbins. After an introductory discussion, they discovered that she knew several of Bill's Forestry friends. He was thrilled. Even then, he loved making connections—especially people who knew his hometown.

For Bill's 22rd birthday his mother made him a chocolate cake. After carefully packing it, she sent his father to the post office. Because he had never mailed anything overseas and was a frugal man, he sent it surface mail. The cake arrived two months later in rather wretched condition. His sergeant felt sorry for him and asked his wife to bake Bill another one.

Another connection from home: Bill remembers playing ping pong at his barracks when he noticed another man, who he did not know, watching from the sidelines. As the game ended, the man approached him and introduced himself as "Lew Niver." Here was Bill's sister, Corky's, new boyfriend. This was the answer to Bill's prediction, written in a letter to Corky a few months before, "Keep waiting, Corky, and I'm sure the right person will come along. I've been through the same thing, and I'm sure that I have found the right person. You probably realize how much I love Elaine, and I hope that I am good enough to deserve such a wonderful person." Corky had also met the "right person." (They've been married over 50 years and raised 3 children and a grandson.)

Those connections to family and a possible future relationship lured Bill home. Although encouraged to re-enlist, which could have resulted in a in a military career, the attraction to the PA girl was too strong.

He returned to the States.



6. Return Home

“If you're walking down the right path, and you're willing to keep walking, eventually you'll make progress.”

Barack Obama, U.S. President

After returning to Bradford, Bill was a bit lost. Where did he fit in? What had happened to his civilian life? I was away in Pittsburgh at college; Ben was married with a beginner family; other friends had moved away or started new lives. He worked for the forestry briefly, but Bill suspected that, because they were twins, officials didn't want to advance one until promotions were open for both of them. Since Ben viewed forestry service as his career, Bill didn't want to hold him back.

Instead, he used the GI Bill to further his education in Pittsburgh. He and Tom Mays, his Army buddy, moved to an apartment on Mt. Washington. The area was a mixed bag. Because of the fantastic view of the city, it was home to several upscale restaurants, but also was marked with, once grand but by then dilapidated, houses. Bill and Tom could afford an apartment in one of those. To attend classes, they had to ride the Duquesne Incline, now a landmark, each way.

To afford this “luxuriant” life style, Bill found a job detailing cars for resale at a garage. He got to keep all the change he found in crevices and under the seats. That didn't amount too much. Living life on the margins, he remembers one time finding a dollar's worth of coins, enough to buy a loaf of bread and a gallon of milk--a far cry from the days at the forestry when he made very little money, yet said he was never broke.

After graduation, Bill applied to two companies. One was in St Louis, designing the finishing touches to the famous Gateway Arch. He realized I would never move that far away from home; (I was teaching at Mt. Lebanon, a suburb of Pittsburgh.) The other was Eastman Kodak in Rochester, NY, much closer to Bradford and Pittsburgh. He debated for a couple weeks. Later he regretted that he didn't take the Kodak offer immediately. Thirty years later those two weeks would have made a huge difference in his retirement package.

Whatever the unknown consequences, Bill accepted the Kodak position.

And we were separated once again.

7. Kodak Years

Every man's work, whether it be literature, or music or pictures or architecture or anything else, is always a portrait of himself.

Samuel Butler, English novelist and critic

Bill loved working at Kodak. He was assigned a team, designing roll-coating machines. I don't understand much about it, but evidently these machines take in the liquid material, roll it thinly, thus creating film.

Knowing no one else in the area, these colleagues of varying ages, became his friends. An interesting note. In one official group photo, there were no women, and in a second photo of 40 employees, there was only one.

Bill had a couple rental opportunities in Rochester. One was renting a house with two other guys within walking distance of his job. No real problems other than the usual, "Who is going to clean the house?" "Who ate my soup?" But the rent was cheap, the location convenient, and the men usually weren't there at the same time. That worked for a while.

The second move was cheaper and provided more privacy but with fewer conveniences. He boarded in an older man's house, occupying one room. I would call it an efficiency, but it didn't even have a bathroom. That was down the hall. Again, the rent was a bargain, and he enjoyed talking to the landlord. Are we surprised?

Bill continued his physical activities by joining a bowling league and a softball team. However, a race for the ball between Bill and the first baseman resulted in a broken jaw for Bill. I had gotten him a light weight jacket for his birthday, but because his jaw was wired shut, he couldn't eat. I returned the jacket and bought him a blender. To suck everything through a straw, all food had to be liquefied. It was late summer so he missed the hot dogs/clam roast/corn on the cob season.

With his usual calm, unruffled manner, Bill accepted his situation with grace—and a loss of pounds that he could hardly afford.



8. Dating

"Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction."

Antoine de Saint-Exupery, French writer and aviator

I liked my teaching assignment and wanted to stay in Pittsburgh, but Bill talked me into applying to several school districts in Rochester. I had an interview at West Irondequoit High School, so I took my first airplane flight to Rochester for an interview. I was offered that job, but there was another district, Chili, who also wanted me to interview. It was a miserable, rainy day, so I figured I would just accept the West Irondequoit job and then the next year, I would look around to decide where I really wanted to teach. I skipped the interview. I never did look for another district spending 44 years at IHS. It's interesting how little things like the weather can determine the path of one's whole life.

Bill wanted get married, but I rather relished the single life. I enjoyed my freedom and privacy, yet still had a date every weekend.

Many of those "dates" were simply returning to Bradford. I liked spending time with my family, and Bill continued hunting and fishing with his.

Then one weekend when Bill was off on a fishing trip, I went "antiquing." I happened to glance down a street where I spotted a "For Sale--Open House" sign. I was intrigued.

That day on Dakeland Road, I fell in love with a white Cape Cod with black shutters, one car garage, two bedrooms, knotty pine kitchen/dining area, sunroom, fireplace, a deep valley back yard with a little bridge over a stream. Perfect.

I hurried home to tell my roommate.

"I found a great house. I want to buy it. I guess I'm going to have to get married!"

Unbeknownst to me, Bill had returned early to surprise me. He was in the living room and heard everything.

So after ten years of stalling, now I was ready.

In a way, I guess, rather than my accepting Bill's many proposals, I actually proposed to Bill. It took a house to do that.

9. Dakeland House Renovation

"Some people look for a beautiful place, others make a place beautiful."

Anonymous

Bill lost no time. As soon as we signed the papers—a mortgage of \$133 a month!--he moved in, set up his bed (a cot) in the living room and straightaway, tore out the existing 1940's fireplace. That scared me a little. I thought one built things in a house—not destroyed them. Bill, however, live with the broken bricks and jagged wood until he found the right building materials—stone. He went into a friend's field, gathered boulders and trucked them home. For next weeks he mixed cement, matched rocks, and dragged in an old barn beam for a mantle, thus creating his masterpiece. Adding that focal point, did make the room cozier—and more Bill-like. This craftsman was on his way.



He did have some excitement. Seems squirrels had made their way through the garage and into the attic. At night he heard scratching and scuffling. These rascals were busy setting up an apartment. Always one to problem-solve, Bill did not go to the attic to accost these little interlopers; instead, he boarded up the entrance, waited a couple days until the scoundrels were

really thirsty, then opened up their entry. When they emerged, (sorry, animal lovers), he shot them with an air rifle. Problem solved. And he could finally get some sleep.

To tell Bill's story is to always refer to building or renovation.

Even after the initial transformation, Bill continued to beautify the house.

Although I was at first attracted to the white house, on closer inspection, we realized the original paint was peeling. (The original owner was a banker, not a home maintenance person.) Bill set about to beautify the exterior. First, he purchased a heat gun which supposedly would lift the old paint. The heating surface was about 10" x 6" which meant Bill had to stand on a ladder all summer, heating and scraping the surface of our two-story house, a few square inches at a time.

Finally, it was finished. Sort of.

Cedar is porous and rough so not all of the paint could be removed. Bill wasn't satisfied. Back he went on the ladder with a can of stain and dyed the whole house. Of course, the color didn't adhere to the embedded paint so, to the perfectionist, the result wasn't good enough.

A trip to the home improvement store netted all new cedar shingles. He tore off the old ones, re-shingled the whole house, then re-stained it a deep rich walnut shade. One job accomplished.

Still not satisfied with the flat look of the exterior, he constructed an entranceway in front of the main door which included an antique stained-glass window. Once, after working at Kodak all day, to add a brick step and walkway, he mixed mortar, finishing just as the sun came up. Evidently, once you start working with cement, you continue until the job is done.

An even more transformative task entailed transforming the single car garage—that we couldn't use anyway because if we pulled the Roadrunner in, we couldn't get out of the car. Bill installed a bay window to replace the garage door. All by himself, he transported slate stone from an old milkhouse to cover the sitting area floor; he used maple planks that my father had left over from our Rutherford Run house to floor the dining area. He constructed a corner cabinet of barn siding with leaded glass doors, and raised huge barn beams over the whole room. Adding antique coach lights, the space became an intimate gathering/dining/TV room where we spent most of our time.



We (mostly Bill because I, as a teacher, had evening and weekend homework.) continued to work on the house: paint, wallpaper, carpet, building window seats--until another problem arose. After all the painting was done, I noticed spiderwebs. Not unusual in an old house, but these were black. Bill searched for the source. The furnace had blown, and oil was spewing throughout the house. New furnace. Repaint. Our "reasonably priced house" was getting expensive—



And we had a wedding to pay for.

10. Engagement

"Once you've found the right person, you just know."

Sophie Turner, British Actress

Bill was resolute we would marry one day, but now it was actually happening.

I saw a teachers' aide, wearing unique rings who told me that her husband made jewelry in their home. Bill was determined to seal the deal. He wanted a special ring so he made an appointment with this craftsman. Sitting on the bed in his house, the jeweler presented several estate diamonds—green, pink. No, I wanted blue, something distinctive, something different than everyone else's. I turned down all the options until he showed us, not a colored diamond I thought I wanted, but a clear sparkler. That was the one.

Using the gold from a ring I had purchased in France, the jeweler crafted an engagement ring in a "uhuru" design, not the traditional circle with no beginning or end, a symbol of endless, eternal love. Instead, Uhuru" is a Swahili term, meaning freedom or independence, so the shape was undulating and irregular. So not traditional, but I liked the symbolism.

I lived in another suburb with a roommate so Bill went alone to secure the ring. I still have the note he wrote to me: "Hi, Sweetheart, I am here waiting for you. The ring is all ours now, and it can't wait for it to be at home on your finger. Thinking of you, Bill."

The inspiration for the unusually designed ring was from *The Prophet, On Marriage* by Khalil Gilbran.

"Let there be spaces in your togetherness, And let the winds of the heavens dance between you. Love one another but make not a bond of love: Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls. Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup. Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf. Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone, even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music. Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping. For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts. And stand together, yet not too near together: For the pillars of the temple stand apart, And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow."

That became our wedded philosophy; the quote also appeared in our wedding ceremony. Yes, we were partners, yet still individuals.

I did not take his name and he did not take mine. I did not hunt and fish; Bill did not practice yoga or Pilates; I did not build and he did not sew; I did not paint; Bill did not do calligraphy. Bill was a Republican; I was a Democrat. Bill was Protestant; I was Catholic. Bill was *Gunsmoke*; I was *Frazier*.

Nevertheless, in our wedded life, together we danced and traveled; we listened to music and told stories; we transformed houses; we entertained; we attended plays and concerts; we hosted young nieces and nephews; we raised four yorkies.

And we loved each other.

Non-traditional in many ways, yet conventional in others. Bill wanted to ask my father for my hand in marriage. Dad was deaf so in our family, whenever we had anything to tell or ask him, we would write it down, usually on the back of the church reminder. I still have the piece of paper where Bill wrote in pencil to my father, "Do you mind if I marry your Daughter next summer?" Dad knew Bill for nine years by that time and liked him. He answered, "I suppose so." (Now I find it amusing that it was the same response he gave when, as a teenager, I asked for the car.) However, after Bill left, he asked if Bill was going to convert to Catholicism. I said I didn't think so. Dad's response: "Damn, that's the last one." (My brothers hadn't married Catholics either.) Although disappointed, Dad never mentioned it again, and he totally accepted Bill as my partner. Besides, Bill was a fisherman and that trumped any religious reservations. ☺

Bill was very excited about the prospect of getting married. He enjoyed every one of our four showers, his bachelor bash, and our engagement party. At work they put a ball and chain on his leg. He loved it all.

Our engagement picture was taken outside in a field of wildflowers—very romantic and hippie.

We were on our way.



11. Wedding

“I, William, take you, Elaine, to be my wife. I promise to be your companion, and to fill your life with warmth, happiness, and peace. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.”

Bill's vows

The rehearsal dinner was held at a local restaurant where the women all wore long dresses, the style at the time. A buffet--\$1.25 a plate.

I continued my iconoclastic approach to our marriage. My mother made all the dresses including my, not white, but ice blue gown. I carried not roses but simple daisies. Our wedding took place in St. Bernard's Catholic Church, but some readings and music were secular. In an era when white was common, our cake was chocolate. The priest was so opposed to some of my choices, that after the ceremony and we left the church, he locked the doors. Oh, well, we planned to have pictures taken outside at the reception anyway.



My most unusual proposal that Father Grady resisted was our choice to have both our parents as our primary attendants. He said there wasn't enough space on the altar. Nonsense. I won. I think they all felt honored to have such

a special part of the ceremony. Mom walked her only daughter down the aisle; Dad got his Catholic wedding. Mr. and Mrs. Troutman had never been in a Catholic church before and there they were--on the altar! No thunderbolts either. It must have seemed like a foreign country to them, but like their son, they took everything in stride.

What Bill remembered best and loved to remind me, "I was the first one at the church." Truly, he was the most excited groom you've ever seen.

Surrounded by friends and family, we were very happy. We were officially a couple.

Although the wedding was in Bradford, PA, the reception was in New York state at the Ho-Sta-Geh Restaurant, pictures outside, then music by a live band where we danced the afternoon away.

The bill came to \$706.61 (I still have the receipt.), covering a delicious buffet (\$3.25 a person), two types of punch, and a champagne toast. What a deal.

I saved the words of that toast by our dear friend, John Ganze. I know my friend, his wife, Miriam, played a role in its composition.

"This has not been an easy matter to arrange. It's been a long time coming. It's been over ten years since Elaine bade farewell to Sister Virginella and met Bill - - ten long years of preparation that everything would be perfect.

The right house had to be found and completely redecorated—all the while thinking up new answers for the widow Northrup next door who kept asking, 'Are you married yet?'

Then a modest engagement ring had to be found—something just large enough to interest Liz Taylor and Richard Burton.

And it had to be proved to Father Grady that Bill really hadn't been married before, not even in Germany. But this poor 65-year-old priest proved no match for Master Sergeant Royer when she lit into his liturgy. He succumbed to a list of 'just a few things to change.'

But then Elaine always has been creative. We need only to think about her vain search for a roasting pan to cook a turkey a few days ago. Why not use a paint roller tray?

Well, it's been a long time coming, but it's been worth it. This weekend the carnival came to town; Miss Teenage American arrived, and we're even planning an eclipse of the sun.

Elaine and Bill, may your families bless you, your friends congratulate you, and all men live in peace with you. May your love continue to bear witness to the love of God for all of us."

A perfect day.

Returning to my parents' house, we opened presents, and on to Rochester for dinner. Arriving too late for our dinner reservation, we spent the evening at our newly refurbished home where Bill had two gifts awaiting: a painting by a favorite artist and a bouquet of flowers. How thoughtful. This was just the beginning of his efforts to please his new wife.



12. The Cobbles

"I have often wondered what it is an old building can do to you when you happen to know a little about things that went on long ago in that building."

Carl Sandburg

For seventeen years we lived in a now renovated house with comfortable spaces for living, guests, and entertaining. Even with a scenic back yard. What else could we possibly want?

Then our dear friend, Miriam, mentioned that the cobblestone near her was for sale. "What cobblestone?" I asked. Even though I passed it almost every day for twenty years, hidden by large trees, a high hedge, and a stockade fence, I never noticed it. A landmark with history and potential, it beckoned to us. So we moved—one mile.

Although it may have fallen on hard times in 150 years, the hidden gem invigorated Bill's creative juices. He immediately launched into restoring this lovely lady to her former glory.

And just in time. Our house was selected for two tours—an Irondequoit Landmark Tour and a Christmas Candlelight Tour. Bill made sure this lovely grand dame of St. Paul Boulevard was dressed and on her best behavior.



13. Keeping Room

We shape our buildings; thereafter, our buildings shape us.

Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of United Kingdom

A “keeping room” has historical roots. It's a small seating area off of the kitchen where family or guests can gather to keep the cook company.

Because the single car garage was too small to accommodate our 20th century car, Bill tore out the wall between the kitchen and the garage. By doing so, he exposed a staircase that had been added in 1897 and signed by the builder. As a lover of history, and out of respect for the craftsman, he didn't completely cover the signature, but instead installed a little panel where one could still access this information.

Continuing his work, he found a desiccated rat in the ceiling. Probably of the same vintage as the house—but he didn't keep it, although I do have a photo of Bill with his “prize.” 😊



Bill completely renovated this new space. He changed a window to a door, installed a bay window, tiled the floor, and added a fireplace. He even cut out a hidden panel for secreting treasures.

It became his favorite spot for entertaining friends and watching TV.

14. Carriage House

“We require from buildings two kinds of goodness: first, the doing their practical duty well: then, that they be graceful and pleasing in doing it.”

John Ruskin, English writer and philosopher

Bill told me later that one of the reasons he agreed to moving was that, as the back yard was large enough to accommodate one, he wanted to build another structure. Energized after renovating the main house, Bill launched into his dream—constructing a carriage house.

He dug the foundation—even encountered walls of an in-ground swimming pool—surely the first of its kind. Designing the building on CAD-CAM, he purchased the lumber and precut the studs, rafters, and roof. Every day after work and on weekends, Bill methodically erected his man cave.

My favorite picture is of Bill, sitting on lumber on the second level, with his back to me, just gazing at his unfinished building. That was Bill—planning, designing, visualizing.



After many months of digging, hammering, drywalling, installing plumbing and electricity, Bill had raised his masterpiece, complete with drive-through garage, a bathroom, a pellet stove, and a finished upstairs area—bedroom, living/dining space, and storage room—really a whole house.

His father, my father, his two brothers had all built homes. Now he had too.

If anyone is old enough to remember *Our Gang*, they will get this reference. The creator of this 20-30's TV series watched a group of kids playing across the street, seeing in them something that was real, honest, and truthful. It became one of the longest running most successful comedies of all time. In the series, Spanky, the main character founded a male only club as a defense against girls and Valentine's Day. Bill loved women, but he thought it would be funny so he ordered a plaque for his new man cave: "He-Man Women-Haters' Club."

However, after a few months, it mysteriously disappeared. . . 😊





15. Bill's Magic

Magic is believing in yourself, if you can do that, you can make anything happen.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German polymath and writer

Chance, luck, destiny, magic?

Mechanical, I'm not. If ever I had a problem with something that didn't work—an appliance, a door, a fixture, frustrated, I would demand that Bill give me a big hammer, threatening to take care of it. He would calmly look over the problem, and -- fix it! I could only say, "Oh, Bill, You're magic."

~~ The first instance occurred when, instead of the horrors of Vietnam, he was shipped to Germany for his military service.

~~ Bill saved over \$300.00 for our trip up the Eastern Coast to Maine.

Most notably, we were anxious to eat a full lobster dinner. We stopped at a roadside shack—obviously very popular—where we were told there would be an hour wait. Impatient to eat, we decided to drive on. When we returned to the car, Bill found, next to the driver's door, his wallet with all of the honeymoon money in it. What if, in our absence, someone had taken it? This was before credit cards, and I had only a little wedding money. (\$5--10 was the average gift then.)

~~ Another time on our Western National Parks vacation, we stopped for a lunch break at an old restaurant in Deadwood, South Dakota. As we were leaving, he put one \$5.00 bill in a slot machine. Out flew \$200!

~~ Later, he attended a sports raffle; he bought one ticket, winning a valuable rifle. I'm not sure whether he ever shot it, but he was very proud of his new possession.

~~ Even friends recognized his ability to appear out of nowhere. On European cruises, Bill, independent and an explorer, had a habit of disappearing. As fellow traveler, Wendy Heffer, wrote, "Whenever we gathered at the end of an excursion, we looked around and--no Bill. Then, just like magic, stepping through the crowd, he would appear."

~~ Once on our only trip to Las Vegas, Bill didn't return to the room the night before we were to fly home. Frantic, I enlisted my brother and sister-in-law, Stan and Deb, to search for him. They couldn't find him either. Then about 2:00 A.M. he knocked on the door. Explanation: He couldn't possibly quit because he had been on a winning streak. (I was not amused.)

~~ Bill wasn't a fervent gambler, but even his poker buddies commented how he had a way of winning. Bob Papes recalled at his memorial service, "He more than held his own at our poker games, pulling winning hands out of thin air. We often wondered how he did that." (I find this interesting because there were times when Bill would come home and say he had a chance of winning the final pot if he had been willing to make a cut-throat move, but he added, "I can't play that way.")

I don't know all of Bill's hunting and fishing stories (or did I just hear them so often, I blanked them out?) Ben would be the source for those.

This one, however, is worth repeating; bizarre and serendipitous, it took several acts of coincidence, luck, and/or magic for this happenstance to occur.

~~ Hunting in Montana, the twins always met local hunters. Because these two bearded down-to-earth Easterners could talk "hunting," they were accepted by Westerners as "one of them," gradually forming lifetime friendships. (Don't tell a Montanan you are from New York; they read that as New York City—city slickers.) One such group who acknowledged them, not as New Yorkers, but as good-old-boys Pennsylvanians, included brothers who owned mules, capable of hauling heavy loads. That was coincidence number one.

In the course of their hunting trip, Bill, being a good shot felled a bull elk. On closer examination he discovered that the whole left side of the elk's rack was missing. Disappointing, but antlers were not the prize; the meat was. However, with a terrain of creeks, windfalls, and cliffs, the beast, weighing hundreds of pounds, could not be dragged out of the woods by only one man; it would necessitate additional manpower, a truck, and/or mules.

Determined to save the valuable meat, Bill drove thirty-three miles to the nearest town, Dillon, to get gas and more rope. Second coincidence: There were three gas stations in Dillon; Bill chose one, and there on the other side of the pump, were the "mule guys."

Third coincidence: After Bill recounted his tale of shooting an elk with an asymmetric rack, one hunter told him that he had been hunting in a nearby area called Honeymoon Park and, climbing down a steep slope, spotted a horn sticking through three feet of snow. (When bull elk fight, they use their antlers to spar. Sometimes they break.) This hunter thought it might make a nice ornament so he dragged the heavy antler to his truck. He suggested to Bill that maybe a taxidermist could affix it to Bill's half rack to look more balanced.

But he had to get the animal out of the woods first. Bill asked if he could borrow their mules. Although they wanted to help, they explained that unfortunately their friends, who only had one more day to hunt, needed the animals that day.

The only solution was to enlist the help of Ben and Kevin, a Montanan hunting friend, to labor in the dark, using the horsepower of an old jeep, yards of broken rope, and lots of man muscle to drag the elk to camp.

Coincidence four:

The western hunters, who usually didn't like Easterners, cared enough about a fellow hunter to try make Bill's rack look a bit more proportional.

That night they trudged up the hill with a case of beer and a special gift, the "found" half rack.

The mule guy (They never even knew his name), stooped down, and snap . . . the splintered horn slipped right on!

They camped near each other; they met at the gas station; this elk lost his left antler 7 miles from where Bill shot it; Bill's new friend picked it up there.

The rack was now reunited and perfect.

"You lucky son of a bitch; you must have a horseshoe up your ass!" one hunter exclaimed.

Yep, Bill carried luck and magic with him.



16. Bill's Fall

There is not such thing as accident; it is fate misnamed."

Napolean Bonaparte, Emperor of France

Until it didn't.

An avid hunter, Bill enjoyed going to sporting events. On Holy Saturday of 2004, he left to attend a sportsman celebration at a local Fire Station. There was going to be a gun raffle. He didn't need another gun, but he had won a very special rifle there before, and he was lucky.

However, not that day.

I received a call from the Emergency Room that Bill had been taken to the hospital. No other information. a car accident? a heart attack? a mugging?

I never did learn what happened. When I went to the fire station the next day, Easter Sunday, only two men were there, but they hadn't been on duty the day before. Of course, all the attendees were gone. We can assume that as the crowd dispersed, and Bill was on his way to his truck, he fell. Was he jostled in the pack? Did he stumble? Was he pushed? No one knows.

Certainly not Bill. In the emergency room, he appeared to be in a good mood and just wanted to go home. There was no wound, no blood, no pain. I was anxious for him to be released as well. It was late and we had Easter Sunday plans. Thank God, they didn't let him go. He would have died that night.

Suddenly he complained of a headache. (He never got headaches.)

Alarmed, the nurse rushed him for an MRI. I followed. Outside the room, I could hear them say, "Mr. Troutman, you have stay still; don't move." I knew something was very wrong because Bill normally would follow orders—especially from someone in authority. When they wheeled him out, he was completely still and silent. They must have given him something to calm him.

Diagnosed with "respiratory failure, dysphasia and seizure disorder," the doctor called it "intraparenchymal hematoma," a brain bleed, recommending an operation to relieve the pressure. I asked what would happen if he didn't have the procedure. The doctor's answer, "Then he will die."

About midnight, Bill underwent a "left front craniotomy."

Prognosis: "He will live, but will probably never be the same."

Thus, began Bill's longest journey.

17. Rehabilitation

“The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of those depths.”

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Swiss-American psychiatrist

In just nine weeks in 2004, Bill was rushed to five different emergency rooms, usually unresponsive and near death.

I still have all the actual medical summaries, but suffice it to say:

“Ventilator, tracheotomy, ORSA pneumonia, feeding tube, catheter, lumbar drain, VP shunt, hydrocephalus, pneumonia, staph, peg, pic, unresponsive, hydronephrosis, rosacea, isolation, confusion, cogwheel rigidity, spasticity, flat affect, dysphagia, oxygen collar, CPR, voice activator, permanent injuries.”

One day the nurses found him on the floor. He had climbed over his bed railing. Another time his head had fallen forward shutting off his oxygen. “Code Blue.”

Nevertheless, he sometimes seemed aware. Once when his friends, John and Miriam Ganze, were leaving after a visit, Bill whispered, “Keep the beer cold.”

Ups and downs.

We searched for a permanent placement for him, but was turned down by several because of his ORSA diagnosis, (an easily transmutable infection), and his need to be moved by a Hoyer lift.

The doctor’s prognosis: “...enough brain damage to preclude a normal life. He will be better than he is now, but won’t be the same.” I received a pamphlet entitled, *Journey Home* “to provide support to individuals as they journey through the dying process.”

After a struggle with bureaucracy, Bill was admitted to St. Mary’s, a brain rehab facility. Finally, something was being done to restore his health. Intermittently, there were positive signs: he pointed to the right direction when he was taken from his room and was ready to return; when Ben drew a deer, Bill counted the horns, (You have to be a hunter to appreciate how important that is); he put the correct shapes in a board of holes; he identified family pictures appropriately.

When he got to the point of writing, although much was unintelligible, he wrote, "Sometimes you regret doing something or doing nothing."

He spoke in a whisper, but once I heard him say, "I'm doing the best I can." Another time: "Can't back out now."

"Remarkable" wrote a doctor in log book.

Then another emergency visit: Bill was found unresponsive. I met a resident in the hallway who said no doctors were available, but he thought Bill had water on the brain and needed an immediate shunt. Since there was no one else around, he asked if I could hold Bill steady while he inserted it. Sure. Just another day in the park.

Miraculously that implant brought an immediate response. A couple months before his injury, I bought some dahlia bulbs and asked him to put them in the carriage house until I was ready to plant them. After his injury, I looked everywhere for them—to no avail. But after this water shunt procedure, Bill became completely lucid. I tested his memory. "Where are the dahlias bulbs?" Without hesitation, he replied, "To the left of the door, on the wall, hanging from a nail." I had my doubts. How is this possible? However, when I went home to check, there they were!

But then, Bill's fortunes changed again. After another emergency visit to ICU, St. Mary's refused to accept him back to brain rehab. "He is at baseline and will not improve." Even the three nursing homes that I selected would not admit him.

At that time, I wrote an email: "It's hard grieving over a loss of someone I knew for over 30 years, who drew, collected, designed, and built, but there is joy in meeting this new person—one who enjoys a shave, appreciates having his back rubbed, still likes to kiss. But part of me hopes he doesn't know that he is both of those people."

Even little things were a blessing: He drew a face on a balloon; he put shapes in a ball; he read words that Ben wrote on a paper; when I said, "I love you," he said, "My Sweetheart."



18. St. John' Nursing Home

"Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway."

John Wayne, American actor

July 6, 2004, Bill was discharged to St. John's Nursing Home on the "comfort care" or hospice floor. He seemed to enjoy his new accommodations; indeed, it was like a real home, beautifully furnished with a dining room, living room, and even a piano. Although he seemed to recognize family and friends while living there, later he admitted he didn't remember anything about that time.

Living in a nursing home at age 61 is a unique experience. Everyone asked if he was my father. I guess sitting in a wheelchair, residing with 80-and 90-year-olds labels you.

Receiving physical and occupational therapy, Bill struggled to improve. He could only whisper and had constant hiccups. He was on a feeding tube and couldn't understand why everybody else was eating and he couldn't. Then he learned to walk behind a shopping cart, but would often pause and just stare at something that interested him.

Friends and family were very supportive, visiting him, talking to him or playing games, taking him to the park across the street. Once he wrote, "Where do you put things for your loved ones?" Did he foresee his death? It was hard to know what he was thinking.

Once a 91-year-old man reported that he had played baseball as a catcher and asked what position Bill played. Bill replied, "Everybody has to catch the ball." Either confused or very wise.

Soon he learned to sit on the edge of his bed, to wash and dress, to participate in physical workouts, play a simple card game, speak loud enough to be heard, smile, laugh, say witty things. When I gave him a foam wheelchair seat and told him it had been my brother, Gene's, he asked, "Did he leave any money in it?"

He frequently greeted visitors who would bring toys, games, drawing equipment, objects to identify, news, a flashlight. He found joy in it all. I'm convinced he recuperated because he had so much interaction with people. And I benefitted too. Many friends and relatives did extraordinary things to make an otherwise traumatic experience almost bearable.

After only four months, on his 62nd birthday, he was surrounded by almost all of his extended family and some friends. As the nurses promised, he was able to eat a meatball, a bit of chicken, and a few bites of his birthday cake.

When I asked him to tell me my name, he said, "Elaine." Then I asked him who I was, and he replied, "An angel."

The nurses pronounced his recovery "miraculous."

But then...



19. Dementia Ward

“Every adversity, every failure, every heartache carries with it the seed of an equal or greater benefit.”

Napoleon Hill, American Author

Bill improved too much.

~~ Always the engineer, he dismantled his wheelchair.

~~ He wandered into other patients' rooms.

~~ Once after roaming at night, a nurse attempted to get him back into bed. Bill locked himself in the bathroom and security had to be summoned. This resulted in being fitted with a bracelet which buzzed when he got near an exit door or the elevator.

~~ The final straw came when he was discovered wheeling a food cart down the back stairs. They declared him a danger to himself and others.

He was immediately moved to the only locked floor--the dementia ward, thus breaking the relationships he had formed with aides, nurses, and residents. There, patients sat around in one room, many with doll babies, often crying or shouting.

They said Bill needed 24-hour supervision and couldn't make executive decisions.

Bill took it all in stride. Once when a woman was running around naked, Bill just remarked, “It takes all kinds.”

He still had a sense of humor. Once when a man came to the dining room, yelling, “Where am I supposed to sit?” Bill quietly replied, “On your ass.”

When I told him I bought a 2005 calendar, for only 99 cents, he said, “Probably a 2003.”

When I asked if he got bored, he replied, “If I do, I'll just run home.”

And once when we were sitting in the courtyard on a beautiful night, he said, “Get a couple of pillows and a blanket and we'll camp out.”

The staff referred to him as “the Sergeant of St. John's.” Pleased at the recognition, Bill would salute. The head nurse mentioned that her husband served in the Indian Army along the Chinese border at the same time Bill served in Germany so then they referred to each other as “comrades.”

However, the staff agreed that Bill did not belong on that floor.

Once I read his horoscope which read, “Feel free—you are. Those who know you well also know that you're at your best when you can't feel the

boundaries locking you in. Reinforce best behavior from loved ones, and you'll get more in the days to come."

Of course, I visited every day and Ben always came on Sunday, but Nancy Detty was a savior, allowing me an evening to get homework and chores done. Each Thursday evening Bill and Nancy ate dinner together, played blackjack, shot pool and took walks together.

Nancy and I were teaching colleagues and walking buddies, but Bill was her "bonus friend." I will let an excerpt from her letter to me after Bill's death speak to that relationship.



"I could almost picture Bill as a young man, working in the forest, doing what he really loved. He would often share tales about that part of his life which I found fascinating. With every conversation I was able to understand Bill a little better and realized that I enjoyed his company.

He told me in detail about building the carriage house. I asked great questions because I was interested in all matters of craftsmanship. And Bill was skilled and enjoyed telling me the nuances of building. I heard about the logs he harvested for the house on Dakeland. I couldn't believe his talent and abilities that were hidden behind his plaid shirts with a cigarette pack in the front pocket. I can still see him

sitting with his winter coat on in front of the little stove in his man cave in the carriage house. It was freezing out there, but he didn't care. A little TV and a beer were all that guy needed.

Bill kept an eye on both of you. I do remember our walk during a torrential rainstorm and honestly thought we would drown on St. Paul Blvd. But here comes a slow-moving truck down the street: It was Bill to the rescue.

We would find treasure troves and engaged in dumpster diving, and Bill acted as the getaway guy.

Both of you helped me open and close my pool on several occasions and thought it was the most natural thing to get gross slimy water dumped on you as we pulled the cover off.

And then I had a cat who peed all over my carpet. I pulled up the damaged part and replaced it with non-matching remnants, piecemealed in. I called and asked you to come look at my latest home improvement but insisted you bring Bill. Both of you took a look, surveyed the hideous mismatched carpet squares and told me it was perfect. Bill told me I did a great job! Liars both of you.

Then there was the accident. Things changed. But I loved spending my one night every week with him. At first, I would just sit and chat with him while he ate, but he always insisted on sharing his cookies with me. I realized it was time to bring my own sack dinner, and it normalized the situation even more. As he healed and improved, we continued our conversations. Usually about nothing. Once I excitedly told him I made it from St. Paul Blvd. to Highland Avenue without hitting one red light. Like me, Bill thought this was a remarkable achievement.

Once he was back home, Bill and I went to a home show at the convention center. There were all sorts of exhibits of roofing, flooring, furnaces, AC's, windows, brooms, grills, brick, etc. I thought this will give us something to do for about half an hour. Three hours later we were still there. He talked to every salesman. I finally abandoned him and went my own way, but he was having a grand old time. Finally, he was done, but we didn't leave quite yet. And this is my very best

memory of my bonus friend. He bought us chocolate milkshakes; we found a table and talked some more. I had my best day.

I keep my house cold because I like it that way. I started wearing multiple layers inside, including my light weight winter jacket. One day I looked in the mirror and thought, 'Good Lord, you've turned into Bill Troutman.' Now I have a little bit of my bonus friend with me all the time."

20. Another Wedding

"Marry someone who laughs at the same things you do."

J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*

Bill's oldest niece, Ben's daughter, Vicki, planned a fall wedding. She wanted her Uncle Bill to be there. Since he couldn't go far—certainly not to Bradford, she decided to profess her vows in the nursing home.

That may sound a little odd, even depressing, but it wasn't.

The nursing home had everything one would need for a lovely wedding: a beautiful chapel, a room to dress, a Sunrise Room for a reception, a catering service providing delicious food.

We spent weeks looking for appropriate gowns for Vicki and her daughter, Shelby; my good friend, Mary McFee, agreed to sing; another friend, Bob Grennan, took photos—just like any normal wedding.

Bill was very excited; he would be the host. He worried whether his suit would fit (it did), what we would serve for food, who would be invited.

That day when the staff heard he was all dressed up, many came to greet him. They were astonished at how well he looked and spoke. (Remember only two months before he was moved by a Hoyer lift, unable to speak or eat.)

The wedding was splendid, the bride lovely, the flowers beautiful, the music inspiring, the dinner and cake delicious, the guests gracious. Bill was in his glory. This was his chance to be an alternative father of the bride.



21. Free at last

“Man needs his difficulties because they are necessary to enjoy success.”

A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, Indian Statesman

In the meantime, I did what I thought best. Considering his prognosis, the health expenses, the danger of a fire, having gas powered machinery, I sold all his “equipment.”—power tools, barbeque, snow blower, lawn mower. Probably his biggest loss was his truck. As the kids say... My bad.

With the aid of Nancy Detty, I brought him for home visits. He did automatically go to the car driver’s side, but gradually understood that I would drive. He commented on changes around the house, watched the Olympics with John Ganze, approved Jeff Guercio’s wiring job, but didn’t mention his missing tools and truck—at least at first.

One evening when I took him back to St. John’s, I told him that he lived there now. He replied, “I got kicked out of the other place so I came here.” It kind of broke my heart. Being moved so often, he must have felt rejected and unwanted.

When the subject of money came up, I asked what he wanted buy. He replied, “You can’t eat money; you might as well spend it.”

For an art show in the gallery, I took his Mickey Mantle pastels, two Van Gogh-eque charcoals, and two oil paintings that he had done years before to hang on the walls. When a nurse complimented his work, he said, “I’m going to sell them.” (I still have them.)

Bill wanted to leave; I wanted him home; the nurses and aides thought he was ready; the doctors weren’t so sure.

~~” He is at risk of doing something dangerous if he is alone.”

~~” He needs to walk more.”

~~” He shouldn’t use power tools.”

~~” He can’t drive.”

~~” What if there’s a fire.”

~~” He might make misjudgments.”

Worse, several primary doctors refused to take him as a patient—a prerequisite for discharge.

Nevertheless, Bill continued to make amazing progress.

~~ He began eating so the feeding tube was removed;

~~ He walked on his own;

~~ He fed himself—even ordered the meals he wanted;

~~ He went to a farm market field trip where he bought me a jar of strawberry/rhubarb preserves.

~~ He started speaking above a whisper.

~~ He underwent a psych exam.

~~ He helped preschoolers make firefighter hats. (They brought day-care kids to the nursing home once a month.)

~~ When I asked him where he wanted to go on vacation, he said, “I’ve been to hell; any place sounds good.”

~~ Our financial advisor took us out to dinner at Woodcliff, an upscale restaurant. Bill declared it beat the dementia ward.

~~ Nursery school children had him lie down on a large piece of paper, where they traced his body, then drew in his features, complete with glasses and mustache, and labeled it “Grandpa Bill.”

~~ At Mass Father Neil recognized Bill as an example of resurrection—indeed he was.

~~ They had put a security bracelet on Bill to prevent his wandering; then two months later, they gave him the key to the recreation room so he could paint Christmas decorations for them. Life’s ironies.

We didn’t want him locked up anymore.

It seemed a miracle: from ICU, to hospice, to dementia, to home in just six months.

Finally, he was discharged.

On his last day he bought flowers for each floor on which he resided at St. John’s. He wrote a note, saying “I can’t thank you enough for your treatment of me. You provided a nice home away from home, and it takes special people like you to take care of injured people like me.”

The social director cooked a whole turkey dinner so I could celebrate with him. Bill even carved the turkey.

Later, he enjoyed his going home party, complete with cake and cider and a coffee mug gift. After a visit to the neurologist, and the final trip home, exhausted, he fell into bed at 5:30.

After seven months (though it seemed like seven years) Bill was safe at home and very happy.

Weary, but free at last!



22. Brain Injury School

“A man endures misfortune without complaint.”

Franz Schubert, Austrian composer

Even though he was capable of living at home, he still had deficits so I convince our long-term health carrier to fund his enrollment in a newly formed clubhouse type rehab facility where adults with brain damage were encouraged to meet their life goals in a safe, supportive and respectful way. At the Hickok Center, clients prepared to re-enter the real world.

I felt like I was sending my little boy off to his first day of school. At 8:30 p.m. he was already in bed, his clothes laid out, lunch in the refrigerator, breakfast ready, and instructions on the table. I did everything but label his jacket, “If lost, please return to. . .

He was admitted in November of 2004. There he socialized, planned and prepared lunch, did exercises, went on field trips, played games on the computer, etc. I received a report every month. The instructors indicated that Bill was “shy and quiet” at first, but soon was “smiling and interacting with others.” He “got along well with fellow members, has a delightful sense of humor which shines through many times during the course of the day and has taken part with enthusiasm in all program activities and outings.”

In only one month they reported that “Bill is making miraculous progress in his recovery.”

Transportation was a problem as I had to go to school every day, but there was a service, Lift Line, whereby we could call the night before and a bus would pick him up. It didn’t always work efficiently, but it was better than having him sit at home all day.

In February the report indicated that Bill “is a very sharing, caring person and everyone responds to his good humor.” He even took some of his elk meat to the center with his recipe for meatloaf and chili, made it, and shared with his fellow members. His recipes were featured in the Nazareth College PT Clinic Cookbook, where proceeds were used to buy PT equipment. He became quite popular.

Bill took pride in his “handy man” role, hanging a bulletin board, checking smoke detectors, helping other find materials, getting the mail, and designing a collage for the exercise room.

After eight months Bill was ready to begin his life of independence.

Discharged from The Hickok Center in June, and missed by his new friends, he hosted a picnic at our house where he proudly showed off his building handiwork.

He was completely rehabilitated in only a year!

He had the rest of his life ahead of him.

I enrolled him in driver training class and he received a new license. He was one happy guy and immediately went out and bought another truck.



23. Bonus Twenty Years

“A good life depends on the strength of our relationships with family, friends, neighbors, colleagues and strangers.”

David Lammy, British politician and lawyer

After a traumatic eight months, our lives basically returned to normal. We traveled to Ireland, a trip that we missed in 2004. That led to other cruises and excursions. Bill enjoyed them all.

He picked up his volunteer work with good Samaritan and Meals on Wheels. He delivered meals with a colleague of mine who had bought his beloved truck. Together they became fast friends, often going out to lunch together.

He continued work on his carriage house and enjoyed many evenings there watching sports and talking with neighbors. Life was good.

In April of 2009, leaving the gray skies and dirty snow of Rochester, we journeyed to North Carolina to visit another antique house that we had heard of--The Biltmore.

Once there, standing in the gardens, surrounded by daffodils and azaleas, I asked Bill, “What do you think of my retiring and our moving down here?” Bill immediately said, “Yes!” I don’t think Bill ever disagreed with one of my ideas.

In nine months, I did retire; we found a property and a builder in Carriage Park, sold our home and many possessions, and by October of that year, we were on our way to Hendersonville.

Bill fit right in. He joined the American Legion, a bowling team, and a golf league; he volunteered to aid seniors with Seniors Helping Seniors; he delivered for Meals on Wheels and at Pardee Hospital he delivered newspapers to rooms and offices. We ushered at the Flat Rock Theater.

What he liked best about all of those activities was the opportunity to connect with people. He would find some way to relate to everyone. If he ever met anyone who was from Pennsylvania, who had been in the military—better yet in Germany—who was related to anyone he knew, he would come home, excited to tell me.

Actually, we called him a “rock talker.” Indeed, he could talk to rocks—and, I believe connect to them, maybe even get a response. Was it just kindness on the part of other people that they all seemed to react to his overtures? I don’t think so. I saw people react with delight at being noticed. Good for Bill.

Once when I went to pick him up from the Legion, he insisted that I come in, that there was someone he wanted me to meet. Sure enough, after a short conversation, we realized that this man and I had a common ancestor named Napoleon. Amazing!

Another time on an airplane, he sat next to a young woman and, of course, Bill started a conversation. He discovered that she was from West Virginia where he had hunted. Better yet, she knew the man, Junior Davis, (by then deceased at 100) who had taught Bill and Ben how to get into Devil's Gulch, a very hidden area in the forest. Bill was ecstatic at this connection.

Then in a restaurant, he asked the waiter where he was from. What are the chances?! The reply? "Bradford, PA." Bill, with his constant queries, had unearthed another link to his past.

I always said, I could just put Bill on a bench in downtown Hendersonville, and he could amuse himself all day and find--no strangers, but instead, a relative, a comrade, a friend.



24. Veteran Brotherhood

The greatest measure of a soldier is not how well he fights, but how well he cares for his fellow soldiers.

In addition to all the formal acknowledgements of his years in the service, after he was discharged, individuals and agencies continued to honor him with their recognitions, friendship and support.

The American Legion played a major part in his life. He joined the Legion in Rochester, NY, where he served as Sergeant of Arms.

In Hendersonville he was asked to be part of the honor guard, but felt that physically he couldn't do the job justice. However, he was accepted into the "brotherhood," and was welcomed at every event. He became an elf to the Legion Santa Claus.

Whenever he entered the Legion, he would hear a chorus of, "Hey, Bill."

One example of veteran friendship remains clear. Bill had a cardiologist appointment, but when we arrived at the office, I discovered that our rear tire was completely flat. I called the AAA. For hours as Bill clutched his oxygen tank, standing in the parking lot, we waited. Finally, they called back, reporting, they couldn't send anyone. (This was during the COVID months.) I'm afraid I didn't even know how to call an Uber, and I exhausted a list of friends who weren't home anyway. Bill suggested calling Ken, a Legion buddy. Ken regretted that he was out of town, but he offered to call his son. A few minutes later, he called back and reported that his son was also unavailable. He promised that he would contact another Legion friend. We were growing desperate.

A few minutes later, a man neither Bill nor I had ever seen, pulled into the parking lot, jumped out of his truck, without saying a word, opened our trunk, and proceeded to change our tire. An angel out of nowhere.

We were so surprised we didn't even ask his name.

He refused to take any money and just drove away, saying, "Veterans take care of each other."

Thank you, Veterans, for that special brand of brotherhood.

25. Awareness

“Awareness is empowering.” Rita Wilson, American actress and singer

As I look back at my years with Bill, I remember noticing one special quality of Bill's.

He seemed to be super vigilant. He noticed details that others (definitely me) might have missed.

Maybe it came from his experience hunting and fishing where his father taught him to be slow, careful, and watchful? Or was it his military training, teaching him to be observant and alert? Or was it his schooling in engineering where he had to design machines to a minuet tolerance?

~~ One example was on our wedding day. My brother Stan had propped up the car on jacks so that when Bill tried to drive, the car would only spin its tires. As we left the reception, Bill immediately spotted the prank.

~~ Another time in the nursing home as he was lying in bed, he commented, “That wallpaper is upside down.” At first glance I didn't notice anything unusual and said so. Then I looked more carefully. The wallpaper border at the top of the room was an abstract design, but at one point, the design was inverted. He noticed.

~~ Later on, when he started walking in the PT room, the therapists and I were thrilled that he was walking and excited to see how long he could stay on his feet. The walls were lined with cases containing many objects—trophies, equipment, certifications. Bill would stop and survey these items, and as much as we encouraged him to keep going, he wouldn't move until he was done examining them.

~~ Once after we had moved to Hendersonville, he was leaving a restaurant where he noticed something laying on the ground in front of his car. Thinking it was probably just garbage, he looked more carefully anyway. It was a man's wallet with hundreds of dollars in it. There was also a name. It happened to be that of a local restaurant owner. Bill returned it to him. No reward was offered, but Bill was satisfied he had done the right thing.

26. Music

*“Life's a dance you learn as you go, sometimes you lead
sometimes you follow, don't worry about what you don't
know.”*

John Micheal Montgomery, American singer and writer

Bill always liked music. In the car whenever a song that he liked came on the radio, he would reach over and turn it up. Then his right hand would rise and float in the air--the conductor directing the rhythm.

Even as boys, the brothers bought a record player together. Like many small town/rural kids, they were attracted to country music, and then rock and roll. In those early years, it was all about Elvis Presley.

When he was shipped to Germany, he heard songs like *Return to Sender*, *Are You Lonesome Tonight*, and *Surrender*. Actually, pretty schmaltzy as I listen to them now, but when a man is young and in love—and worse--separated—those song spoke to him.

Later another musical artist moved Bill.

In the late eighties, he was hunting in the Montana mountains with limited radio reception. Nevertheless, one night they heard Garth Brooks singing, *Friends in Low Places*. Bill forecasted, “That guy’s going to be number one.” (I think Bill always felt he discovered the young singer.) He was right. Brooks has released 27 records in all, which include 17 studio albums, two live albums, three compilation albums, three Christmas albums, and four box sets, along with 77 singles. And to the end, Bill to turn up the volume.

Another of Bill’s favorite stories involves Garth Brooks and Ben. His family wanted to go to Buffalo to see Brooks in concert. Usually, tickets to such big-name performers were very expensive, and out of reach for most people. Then they heard that Brooks said that he had enough money, that his great-grandchildren wouldn’t even know him, yet they would also be wealthy. Brooks wanted the everyday working man to be able to enjoy his concerts so the tickets would sell for only \$40, The whole Ben Troutman family was able to attend for a very affordable price. Bill respected that selflessness and humanity.

Knowing he did not have a long time to live, for his Pinning ceremony, hosted by Four Seasons Hospice and held at the American Legion, Bill

chose a Garth Brooks song. Here Bill acknowledges that his life is short but he urges listeners to tell others how you feel about them while you are alive.

Troutman honored during 1,000th pinning ceremony



Retired U.S. Army Sgt. Bill Troutman was honored in February at the American Legion during Four Seasons' 1,000th pinning ceremony. PROVIDED BY FOUR SEASONS

Hendersonville Times-News | USA TODAY NETWORK

Four Seasons held its 1,000th Veteran Pinning Ceremony in February at the American Legion in Hen-

dersonville in honor of retired U.S. Army Sgt. Bill Troutman, who served during the Vietnam War. He ended up earning the title of Senior Assembly Rocket Specialist during his service.

27. Bill's Favorite Stories

I wish I could remember them all, and I know as soon as I finish this, more will come to me, but I do remember some of his favorites.

A.

The first occurred the day he was born.

In 1942 long distance phone calls were not made casually. Someone better be dead or dying. But on August 9th, Bill's father's brother called to proudly announce that he had a new daughter, born the day before, and they were going to name her Nancy.

With a little one-upmanship, Mr. Troutman's reply: "Congratulations. Today we had two sons, and we are going to name them Bill and Ben."

B.

Another story concerned a General.

After most of our family connections evaporated from the north, we started spending Thanksgiving in Charlotte with my oldest brother's family.

The day after the holiday, we would go to a restaurant for dinner.

My great nephew, Thomas, was there to introduce his fiancé, Melissa, to the rest of the family.

Melissa asked if she could sit next to Uncle Bill.

In the course of the evening, after Bill, in his usual way of connecting, asked her about her family.

"Do you have brothers and sisters?"

"I have a sister and two brothers.

"What does your sister do?"

"She graduated from West Point and is a Captain in the Army."

"What about your brothers?"

"My oldest does Navy contracting. My youngest is still at West Point, playing football."

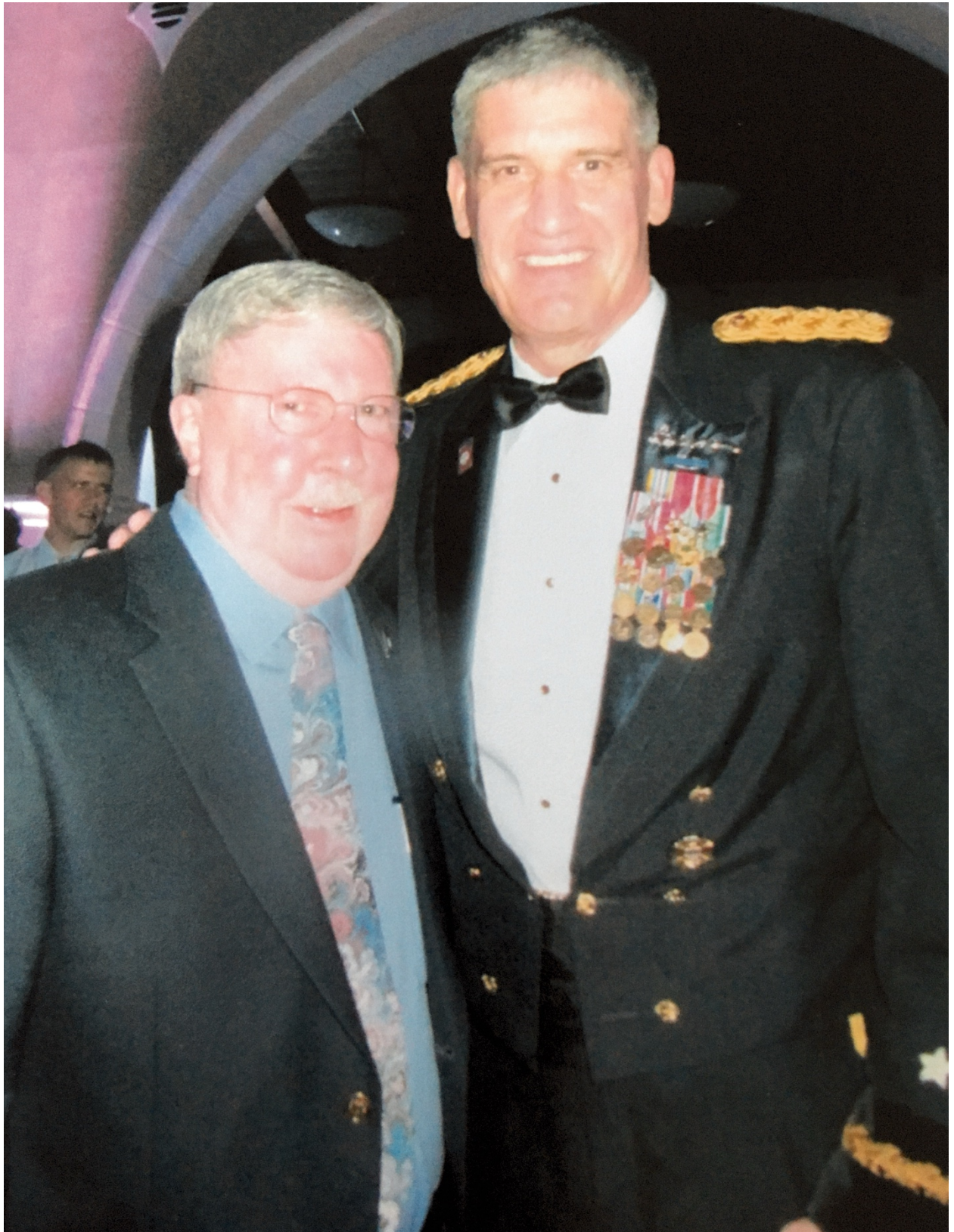
Bill was super impressed. Having only made sergeant; he was amazed at young people who achieved rank at such a young age.

"That is pretty impressive. What does your Dad do?"

"He's a three star General."

Well, that was it. Bill felt he had touched greatness and loved to tell the story. (In subsequent years, the General was an aide to General Schwarzhoff, received another star, and retired having spent more time as a combat commander than Generals Eisenhower, Patton, and Bradley combined.)

You can imagine how honored Bill felt at the wedding to meet the commandant of Fort Bragg and to even have had brunch at his house.



C.

This story relates another brush with fame.

In this story, Bill got involved in his only verbal battle with another person.

After deciding to buy the cobblestone, we put our now expanded cape cod house on the market, asking more than the “comparables” called for. Bill had invested his heart and labor into the home, and he knew what it was worth. On the evening of the open house, we received three offers:

- a. A judge, offering asking price with \$10,000 earnest money,
- b. A couple, offering over asking price and \$5,000 earnest money,
- c. Audrey Hepburn offering the asking price and \$5,000 earnest money.

A little background: Audrey’s companion, Robert Wolder, a B level actor who starred in *Larado*, the former husband of Merle Oberon, and partner of both Leslie Caron and Shirlee Fonda had a Dutch mother. Mrs. Wolders wanted to move to Irondequoit because she had two daughters who owned houses there. She had already purchased a home just around the corner, but one of these daughters had attended our open house and insisted that our Swiss Chalet type home would be perfect for her mother. (They could resell the other house.)

Returning exhausted from a weekend family reunion, we were overwhelmed with all the information, but we accepted the second offer.

However, the next morning, our agent reported that Audrey, calling from Switzerland, had countered with \$20,000 over asking price. He said that we had a 3-day attorney refusal option, so we told our agent to withdraw our original acceptance and take the Audrey’s offer. He further assured us that people never counter a refusal.

Robert Wolders flew in from Switzerland that evening to videotape the house. Even Bill agreed Wolders was drop dead gorgeous with charisma that was felt across the street. (Of course, our neighbors were watching.)

Well, the agent was wrong. They did sue us.

The husband, who also worked at Kodak, called Bill there, threatening him in very profane language. Bill argued back, rather heatedly.

Nevertheless, we were served with papers to appear in court.

The outcome: We had to accept the couple’s offer, but they had to pay Audrey’s price. So we never met Audrey, but I know Bill would have enjoyed showing her his handiwork.



28. Bill's Coda

Bill lived everyday with enthusiasm and joy.

He even played an old fashioned, 19th century Santa just four months before he died.



Bill had medical challenges, but maintained his lifestyle until about 2023.

Gradually independence decreased. He no longer drove; he quit bowling and golfing. Covid cut out volunteerism. His heart would plummet and he would fall.

A sad decline to a life well lived, but Bill kept his humor until the end, even entertaining his visiting nurses and aides.

Bill left us exactly twenty years to the day after his initial accident. What a gift to be granted an additional fourth of his life.

On April 10th just after I kissed his cheek and left the room, Bill quietly slipped away.

Maybe he didn't want me to see him go.

After 81 years, Bill Troutman had lost his magic.



29. Epilogue

So there it is. Bill's life story (and his favorite stories) as I remember them. All people deserved to be remembered, if only for a little while. I miss him terribly. He was my whole life. At least he can live in my heart for as long as I live, and maybe these stories, now recorded, will last even longer.

I close with Bill's final message, printed on the Homegoing program.

*"Pardon me for not greeting you.
I hope you can forgive me for being
Such an unwelcoming host.
I should be remarking on my delight at seeing you again,
Or complimenting your shirt, your necklace,
or offering you a seat and a drink,
But I'm busy dancing with the angels.
No need to mourn me,
Instead, propose a toast to our friendship,
For I am sure you will remember well
How I loved to talk and joke with you.
So chat amongst yourselves, my friends, recall an amusing
event or two.
Feel free to share a tale at my expense,
And we'll all have a good laugh at the end."*

In a recent conversation, Ben revealed that he had a dream that he and Bill were young, blond boys, running through a field of wildflowers. Isn't that a lovely picture? I treasure that as my image too.

30. Appendix

A. Military Honors

“The veterans of our military services have put their lives on the line to protect the freedoms that we enjoy. They have dedicated their lives to their country and deserve to be recognized for their commitment.”

Judd Gregg, lawyer and US Senator

Bill was proud of his military service and felt he was amply rewarded for it.

1. Most important to him: He used the **GI bill** to further his education. That made all the difference in the world to his future life. I hope they never drop that benefit.
2. From Barack Obama, he received a “**Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War.**”
3. The **American Legion**, the largest veteran’s organization in the world, both in Rochester and Hendersonville welcomed him into their ranks, where he committed himself to charity work.
4. In June of 2017, Bill received recognition with a certificate at a ceremony hosted by the **Daughters of the American Revolution.**
5. Bill was awarded the **Quilt of Valor** when he was recognized for his service with a certificate and a handmade quilt in an outdoor ceremony, attended by neighbors, friends, and the creator of the quilt.



6. In 2024 Bill became the 1000th veteran to be awarded a certificate, medals, and pins at a **Pinning Ceremony**, attended by the Four Seasons Hospice team, veterans, and his friends and family.



7. At the same ceremony Congressman Chuck Edwards presented Bill with the **Congressional Challenge Coin** and a **U. S. flag** which had been flown over the Capital Building on November 11th, 2023.

8. Bill was honored by Beverly Harper Dague with a brick bearing his name and rank at the **Veterans' Memorial in Sunset Beach**, North Carolina.

9. With Vickie Baker's support, a **commemorative flag** with Bill's Army photo, name and rank flies in his hometown of Bradford, Pennsylvania.

10. Upon Bill's, **President Joe Biden sent a certificate** honoring Bill's memory.

11. **The Veterans Administration** mounted a shadow box on the **Wall of honor** at the **VFW**, containing Bill's medals, photos, and a QR code with a path to other information about Bill.

12. At his Going Home Ceremony, Bill was accorded **Military Burial Honors**: accompanied by the color guard from the Legion, soldiers **played Taps, shot a rifle volley**, folded and presented the **United States Flag**.

13. At that event, **Colonel John Wright**, spoke, noting that "Sergeant Bill's enlisted time was performed with Valor, Honor, and Sacrifice, worthy of recognition for years to come."

14. Bill's final resting place is in the columbarium at **Military Cemetery** in Black Mountain, North Carolina.

Engraved in white marble:

**William Joseph Troutman,
Sergeant E5,
Loved Husband,
Friend to all,
At Rest."**

Perhaps that's why I felt the need to write Bill's story.

How could I allow Bill's life to be reduced to 5 short lines?

B. The Cobblestone

I can't write Bill's story without including the historical cobblestone story. It became so much a part of our lives. I wrote the following for the house tours that we hosted—an Irondequoit Landmark Tour and a Christmas Candlelight Tour. I will add it here, but you can skip it unless you love architecture, interior design and history.
Which we certainly did.

A House with Idiosyncrasies

How would you like to live in a house flooded with light, with straight, even walls, one that is easy to decorate, free of maintenance problems, and adaptable to every modern convenience?

If that's what you want~~don't buy a cobblestone.

Although your first impression may be one of delight at the quaint, unique character of these old homes, if you are a perfectionist, the idiosyncrasies of these buildings can be frustrating.

Because the walls are solid stone, radiator pipes and some electrical wires must be run up the inside of the walls; no wall is plumb so you better not hang wallpaper without large dose of patience and a sense of humor; and don't plan on finding your furniture where you left it—it "walks." No, it's not ghosts who creep out at night and rearrange your rooms; it's the uneven floors. If something has wheels or casters on it, you might find it across the room.

The Evolution

To appreciate the eccentricities of these structures, you must understand the history of the formation of these rare buildings. Cobblestones began their evolution 475 million years ago. The combination of living creatures, sand, and clay underwent enormous pressure and in time formed bedrock. During the Ice Age, when the glaciers that covered New York State retreated, they did two things: they ground out loose stones from the exiting bedrock and carried down stones from Canada. These provided "field cobble"—rounded but still rough stones. Moreover, the glacier-created streams and lakes provided an additional supply of even smoother, water-tumbled cobbles, known as "lake cobble." The St. Paul house is composed of a combination of field and lake cobble, varying in color, size, and texture. Each stone is unique and beautiful.

In the early 1800's, the first inhabitants of this region who lived in wooden houses, simply removed stones to form miles of fences. However, after the construction of the Erie Canal, the farmers became more

prosperous and wanted more substantial homes to reflect their improved status.

Enter the second element to build these structures: the masons. After these craftsmen finished building the canal, many stayed in the area and found employment building cobblestone structures. As opposed to the European mason, the Americans took greater pains to carefully select uniform stones, to let the stones project beyond the mortar, and to further highlight the stones by embellishing the mortar around them.

What is a “cobblestone”? It is a stone that can be picked up in one hand; a “pebble” can be held between the thumb and forefinger; anything too big for one hand is a “boulder.”

Construction

Cobblestone buildings flowered from about 1830 to the beginning of the Civil War. Although you may see them in Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Canada, 90% of the American cobblestone buildings are within a 75-mile radius of Rochester. Ours is the only one in West Irondequoit; there is another home in East Irondequoit on Pardee Road.

Early houses—and ours is one of the earliest--were built by using stones picked up from the fields or from piles at the edge of fields. Later they paid more attention to matching color and size. At this stage, they hauled wagonloads from the lakeshore, costing 50 cents a load. Children and women often aided in gathering stones from the fields where the stones were “sized” by passing them through an iron ring called a “beetle ring.”

Generally, the cobblestones were used to “face” a wall that had already been built from larger, coarser fieldstone. However, our walls were constructed in one operation, a very durable form of construction. The interior walls are made of larger cut stones. The exterior stones were selected for their size and shape, with the uniform, smaller, prettier stones on the front of the house. As a result, the walls are 18 inches thick. This can be an advantage for heating and cooling. The stones heat up in the summer so the furnace isn’t necessary until November; then they cool down in the winter so that even in June and early July, the interior may feel air conditioned.

An exterior plank wall was constructed to keep the sides straight and even. In addition, “quoins,” large cut corner stones, were placed at regular intervals to keep the corners square.

The lime mortar that was used remained flexible for only a few hours so they had to work quickly, but the hardening was slow; it took about 20 years, but it gave the building time to settle and adjust without cracking. To give order to what might otherwise look like a random collection of stones, the mortar between the stones was formed into a projected “v” with a special tool.

The “lintels,” the crosspieces over the doors and windows that carry the weight of the structure above it, were made of wood or stone. Our house has a combination of both.

Homes were built over several seasons, allowing time for the first layers to harden before adding another. You can see the difference in the color of the mortar and the quoins between the first and second story. The stones on the second story are larger; they must have run out of the uniform ones. You can also detect where windows and doors were removed. Probably part of the house was constructed one summer; then as the family’s needs changed, they added on and changed features.

The beauty of cobblestone buildings depends on light. The texture of stone and mortar create a fascinating pattern that sparkles and becomes vibrant when the sun plays across its surface.

The St Paul Boulevard Cobblestone

In 1806 John Hornby of Great Britain and Ireland purchased the land from the State of New York. Extending to the Genesee River, our property was originally 85 ½ acres. The house was probably built in 1830 because the deed indicates that the land and “premises” were sold in 1834. It has had 17 previous owners, most notably Theron Bastian, the president of Bastian Brothers, manufacturers of school rings and class jewelry on Clinton Ave.

A couple interesting restriction on our property existed in 1936 when Mary Kronbein sold off the part of the estate for the “Westbourne Tract.” According to the abstract, no houses could be built “less than two full storeys (British English spelling) in height, “and none of those houses could “cost less than \$6000.” In addition, “no building shall be used for a stable, nor intoxicating liquor shall be made or sold on said premises, and nothing offensive or noxious maintained thereon.” Another commentary on the times: “Said premises are sold on the express covenant that they shall never be occupied by a colored person.”

Like most cobblestones, our house is Greek Revival style, fashioned after the Ancient Greek temples with a “return” at the edge of the roof, symmetrical windows, doors, and porches, and a side entrance. It can otherwise be characterized as a “shotgun” design, meaning you could open the front door and fire a shotgun through the house through the back door without hitting anything. Two one-storey rooms are attached to either side.

One interesting feature is the metal ring on the back south corner—to your left as you look at the driveway entrance. Its purpose? To tether the horses.

In addition, the metalwork on the very front of the house is called “tracery” and has been determined to be very old because it was molded in one piece. The roof over that veranda is copper.

We have three verandas, all open, but with roofs so one can sit outside, even in the rain and enjoy fresh air without getting wet or sunburned. We lovingly called the house, "The Cobbles." Since we owned the only one in West Irondequoit, everyone recognized the distinctive and beautiful lady of St. Paul Boulevard.



C Homegoing Ceremony

Excerpts from Memorial Service Guests

1. Bob Papes, Carriage Park poker buddy

"What impressed me most was Bill's positive outlook on life. He never let his injury influence his outgoing attitude and personality, never a 'woe is me' attitude. He taught us by example how to deal with the adversity. He did it by telling or listening to a humorous story. Definitely a jokester."

2. Don Royer, nephew

"Uncle Bill was a 'good guy.' I felt like his peer, and not just a kid as he would show a genuine interest in me. My children felt the same way.

He always had good cars which makes an impression on a kid. I specifically remember getting in his Plymouth Roadrunner. His only complaint was that the horn didn't make the 'beep-beep' sound like the cartoon character.

Uncle Bill was always warm with the whole family, especially my grandparents. He embraced us all.

He was an accomplished man in the forestry, the military, as a hunter and fisherman who shared trophies and great stories of his escapades. He took pride in all his activities, hobbies, and construction. He truly was Aunt Elaine's right-hand man.

Uncle Bill loved a good story or joke and the rare gift of finding something in common with anyone he met. He engaged with people, listening to them, finding the best in others. Even in a kid like me.

I have heard it said you can't choose your family, but whether you were family or friend, Bill Troutman chose us. We are fortunate and better for it."

3. Vickie Baker, niece

"My earliest memories of Uncle Bill were of his teaching me to walk and of catching me at the bottom of the stairs one Christmas Eve when I fell.

He would take me hunting and more than once we would end up in trouble, lost and tramping out of the woods well after dark.

My sister Terri remembers playing catch with Uncle Bill and staying in the carriage house with her volleyball team.

My sister Dana remembers numerous visits to the cobblestone where they hung their clothes to dry on his deer mounts. His homes were genuine treasures and magical places to visit.

The memory I would like to forget is when Grandma took me to meet Mickey Mantle, a childhood hero of both Uncle Bill and me. I took one of Uncle Bill's paintings of Mickey with me to have it signed. Well, I got it signed all right, but Mickey misunderstood and wrote, "Nice job, Ben." Sorry, Uncle Bill.

All of Uncle Bill's nieces and nephews adored him. He took the time to talk to us and treat us as if we were special. Uncle Bill was someone you could just be with. You did not have to be talking or doing anything at all. His presence was enough.

The connection between him and his twin brother, my father, never faltered. Their hunting trips provided countless hours of stories for us, both funny and frightening.

Uncle Bill's smile, his kindness, and calm demeanor is what I will miss the most.

His presence on this earth may be over, but his presence in our heart will remain.”

4. From sympathy cards:

“Bill was always spreading joy and laughter.” Dave Grennon

“I still see him mowing our Beaver Creek yard; he even taught me to like my Merlot chilled.” Kathy Oliver

“While writing curriculum at your house, Bill washed my car!” Jeff Guercio

“He always had great things to say in his own unique way.” Mary Matthews

“I remember him for his sense of humor and joy of life.” Paulette Cliff

“He was a kind and good-hearted soul.” Mary Beth Hayes

“He faithfully picked me up at the airport” Father Bernie McAniff

“Bill had a way of disappearing and reappearing like magic.” Wendy Heffer

“He was thoughtful and kind.” Bill and Jean Holmes

“He had a love affair with the world.” Dick and Eileen Downing and Libby

“He made me laugh. Bill had wit and insight, strong in will and spirit and an inspiration to all of us overcoming a hardship.” Nancy Russ

D. The Music

1. ***The River***, written and sung by Garth Brooks, Bill's favorite vocal artist, uses the river as an analogy. The song reminds us that in life we sail, we ride the rough waters until the river runs dry. Bill had reached the end of his journey, but he did "dance the tide."

You know a dream is like a river
Ever changin' as it flows
And a dreamer's just a vessel
That must follow where it goes
Trying to learn from what's behind you
And never knowing what's in store
Makes each day a constant battle
Just to stay between the shores
And I will sail my vessel
'Til the river runs dry
Like a bird upon the wind
These waters are my sky
I'll never reach my destination
If I never try
So I will sail my vessel
'Til the river runs dry
Too many times we stand aside
And let the waters slip away
'Til what we put off 'til tomorrow
It has now become today
So don't you sit upon the shoreline
And say you're satisfied
Choose to chance the rapids
And dare to dance that tide
And I will sail my vessel
'Til the river runs dry
Like a bird upon the wind
These waters are my sky
I'll never reach my destination
There's bound to be rough waters
And I know I'll take some falls
With the good Lord as my captain
I can make it through them all
I'll never reach my destination
If I never try
So Lord, I will sail my vessel till the river runs dry

31. In ***When I Get Where I'm Going***, Brad Paisley and Dolly Parton voice Bill's desire that you "not cry for him down here," for he has shed his "time

When I get where I'm going
On the far side of the sky
The first thing that I'm gonna do
Is spread my wings and fly
I'm gonna land beside a lion
And run my fingers through his mane
Or I might find out what it's like
To ride a drop of rain
Yeah, when I get where I'm going
Well, there'll be only happy tears
I will shed the sins and struggles
I have carried all these years
And I'll leave my heart wide open
I will love and have no fear
Yeah, when I get where I'm going
Don't cry for me down here
I'm gonna walk with my granddaddy
And he'll match me step for step
And I'll tell him how I've missed him
Every minute since he left
And then I'll hug his neck
So much pain and so much darkness
In this world we stumble through
All these questions I can't answer
And so much work to do
But when I get where I'm going
And I see my Maker's face
I'll stand forever in the light
Of His amazing grace

Bill was raised in a Christian Church which gave him his foundation in morality and character. He believed that there was a higher place. This next song, ***Go Rest High on That Mountain*** by Vince Gill, Allison Krauss, Ricky Skaggs, reminds us that Bill's work is done and he has found a place to rest.

I know your life
On earth was troubled
And only you could know the pain
You weren't afraid to face the devil
You were no stranger to the rain
Go rest high on that mountain
Son your work on earth is done
Go to heaven a-shoutin'
Love for the Father and the Son
Oh, how we cried the day you left us
We gathered 'round your grave to grieve
Wish I could see the angels faces
When they hear your sweet voice sing
Go rest high on that mountain
Son your work on earth is done
Go to heaven a-shoutin'
Love for the Father and the Son
Go rest high on that mountain
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Love for the Father and the Son
Go to heaven a-shoutin'
Love for the Father and the Son

This next song is sung mostly in Italian. Andrea Bocelli and Sarah Brightman remind us that the light is inside us as it is **Time to Say Goodbye**. This is the translation

When I am alone, I sit and dream
And when I dream the words are missing
Yes I know that in a room so full of light
That all the light is missing
But I don't see you with me, with me

Close up the windows, bring the sun to my room
Through the door you've opened
Close inside of me the light you see
That you met in the darkness

Time to say goodbye
Horizons are never far
Would I have to find them alone
Without true light of my own with you
I will go on ships overseas
That I now know
No, they don't exist anymore
It's time to say goodbye

Etta James was an American singer and songwriter who performed in various genres, including gospel, blues, jazz, R&B, rock and roll, and soul. She led the mourners out with an exultant reminder that Bill has flown away to “a land where joys will never end.”

Some bright morning when this life is over
I'll fly away
To that home on God's celestial shore
I'll fly away

I'll fly away oh glory
I'll fly away (in the morning)
When I die hallelujah by and by
I'll fly away

When the shadows of this life have gone
I'll fly away
Like a bird from these prison walls I'll fly
I'll fly away

Oh, how glad and happy when we meet
I'll fly away
No more cold iron shackles on my feet
I'll fly away

Just a few more weary days and then
I'll fly away
To a land where joys will never end
I'll fly away



E. Eulogy

Elaine

Much of this information, I have already related, but I will include my eulogy. It's the "Readers' Digest" version of Bill's life. ☺

"With the exception of his twin brother, Ben, and his sister, Cora, I am the one who has known Bill the longest. We attended the same grade school, started dating in our late teens, and married ten years later. That adds up to over 70 years.

Bill spent his youth in two pursuits—neither one of them--girls. No, Bill was quiet, timid, and shy. He only ever had one girlfriend. Instead, encouraged by his father, he hunted, fished, and played baseball. Modeled by his mother, he painted and sketched. His favorite artistic endeavor was 3 portraits of Mickey Mantle. Unknowing of the future value--in that process of drawing lines on the original, he destroyed Mantle's valuable rookie card. No money there. So instead, he went to work.

During those early years, while employed with brother Ben at the US Forestry, he helped construct trails and overlooks in the Kinzua National

Forest. He always enjoyed working outside and building. However, that career was cut short when he was drafted into the Army. Deployed to Germany, he served as senior assembly rocket specialist, transporting and arming nuclear warheads. Although he was encouraged to re-up, the lure of the girl back home beckoned. Ten years later, he married her.

Taking advantage of the G.I. bill, he attended college in engineering. Accepting a job in Rochester, NY, at Eastman Kodak, he designed film coating machines and components for a camera destined for NASA space exploration.

That was his day job. In the evening and weekends, as an elderly neighbor remarked, he was “good with his hands.” He completely renovated our first home. He dug foundations, laid rebar and brick, built two fireplaces, installed wood and stone flooring, raised massive beams, and added rooms and decks.

He was tenacious. That first house was sided with cedar shingles—painted but peeling—so he spent a whole summer on a ladder with a handheld heater, scraping off the old paint. He didn’t like the result so he then stained the whole house, applied with only a brush. He still didn’t like the effect so he tore off all the old shingles and completely replaced them with new ones. The house resembled a Swiss chalet. Actually Audrey Hepburn, yes that one, submitted a bid to buy it. But that’s another story.

Later, after moving into a 150-year-old landmark, a cobblestone, Bill continued his renovation projects.

Late one night he hung wallpaper—which we found curled on the floor the next morning. Again, doggedly determined, he properly primed the walls and rehung the paper.

His biggest accomplishment, and the one of which he was most proud, was the construction of a carriage house, designing the structure on Cad-cam and assembling it alone. He even raised the header and rafters all by himself.

Unfortunately, a fall in 2004 resulted in a traumatic brain injury, sending him to a nursing home in hospice care. This would be the end of his life. However, one day the nurses caught him dismantling his wheelchair. Then he was found dragging a food cart down the stairs. That resulted in a move to the only locked floor—the dementia ward. He took it all in stride and continued to improve.

We call him “the resurrection man.” Miraculously, in seven months, he returned home, stepped into his former life and found new interests: golfing, bowling, volunteering, and traveling.

These last 2 decades were the years he shouldn't have had, but by the grace of God, he did.

In 2009, vacationing in North Carolina, seduced by the comforting mountains, attracted by the natural beauty and the culture of this area, we decided to move to Hendersonville which reminded us of our hometown, Bradford, Pennsylvania.

Bill loved this area and his new friends. Again, redesigning his life, Bill joined a golf league and a bowling team; he volunteered—for Meals on Wheels, Good Samaritan, Flat Rock Playhouse, Seniors Helping Seniors, and Pardee Hospital. He was active every day.

That sums up what he did with his life. More important is the man himself. Even though as a young adult, he was called, "Wild Bill," which followed him through life, that nickname was merely meant as an oxymoron. Actually, he was the opposite--gentle, calm, and kind—the qualities that attracted me to him all those years ago.

Bill lived to please me. No matter what construction project, vacation destination, decorating idea, or fashion statement that I dreamed up, Bill was immediately on board. (Maybe his military experience taught him how to follow orders.)

He loved music—all kinds. Together we picked out the selections today. Whether he was sitting on the couch or traveling in the car, (I suppose just to amuse me), whenever I played a song he liked, his hand would float up, seemingly moved by a spirit, as he conducted the melody.

One of the most endearing qualities was his love of people—all people.

Bill never met a stranger. Although I often cringed as he did it, he would open a conversation with anyone, whether he knew them or not. It didn't make any difference whether he was in an elevator, sitting in a waiting room, or standing at a bar, Bill would comment on something about the person: his shirt, her jewelry, a child's toy. It was his way of connecting, making the person feel noticed and valued. I was always amazed at how pleased the objects of his attentions were. So often they would react with delight at being really seen.

One week to the date and time of Bill's passing, I, checking out at a store, a young cashier, complete with piercings, tattoos, and green hair, remarked, "I like your blouse; it's very springy." See, Bill is already spreading the word.

A former neighbor wrote to me, saying, and I quote, "He was a man's man but always a sweetheart to the women he knew; Bill never failed to make you feel good about yourself. He was the guy with whom you wanted to sit on the porch and have a beer."

And he loved kids. I kept telling him, "With the world the way it is today, you can't talk to children you don't know." Undeterred, he continued to start conversations with babies through teenagers. And they in turn were attracted to him, I guess sensing that he really liked them. He would have been a good father, but he settled for being a favorite uncle. Testimony of that: almost thirty nieces and nephews are here today, from Charlotte, Georgia. Florida, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania.

In summary, we have lost a hardworking, talkative, entertaining, creative, sweet, gentle, loving man.

It is difficult to let go of someone we love, but we can take solace in words on a tombstone in Ireland; "Death leaves a heartache no one can heal; love leaves a memory no one can steal."

F. Bonus photos





















