

MEMORIES OF OUR BILL



Bill wanted to tell us about himself. He wanted us to know him better and remember him. The book he would write was to be bound and given to each of us at his memorial service.

This would be difficult under any conditions and, in spite of help from Jeannie and Maureen, Bill didn't get to tell us how he saw his life.

That leaves knowing and remembering up to us. We have to tell it ourselves, fragment by fragment, in the best way we can.

MEMORIES OF OUR BILL

On a December morn with new snow silently drifting down, father Bill and I drove off to St. Mary's Hospital. About an hour later, Billy put in an appearance much to the surprise of the doctor and especially Grandma Stiles. She had come out from Washington State to be of help since our family consisted of Shelly and Maureen, plus the Christmas season was upon us. Billy's arrival on December 18th necessitated a five day stay in the hospital in those days. So on Monday the 23rd, home we came and our impulse was to put him under the Christmas tree - a most special gift to all of us.

Billy loved having his birthday a week before Christmas. It was a great occasion for a birthday and a tree trimming party. Since our 3024 N. Wisconsin St. home had a 16 foot living room ceiling, the tree was placed next to the second floor balcony. Great fun was had dropping tinsel down on the tree from above, not always landing like I would have preferred. We always had two

lists of gift ideas for Bill so as not to minimize his birthday. I delighted in buying sweaters, shirts, silk pajamas and robes, all of which he seemed to enjoy and put to good use. Guess being single, it was nice to have Mom do some of his personal shopping.

Bill truly was always a cooperative member of the family, with many creative interests and a joy to be called ours. He was always happy organizing a neighborhood activity in our big backyard at 3024 where we moved the year he was approaching five.

His years at St. Patrick's school through the 6th grade went swiftly and he was always ready to do a chemistry experiment for his class once a week. He transferred to Jerstad Jr. High for 7th through 9th grades and that opened up many new avenues of interest. A series of Industrial Arts classes for one year consisted of photography, metal-working, printing and woodworking. Of course, he managed an A in each of them. He even went out for football in 9th grade but a broken left little finger put a quick stop to that endeavor. The coach declared it only a sprain but after a week of pain, endured bravely, we had it X-rayed. It was too late to have it set so Billy always had a crooked little finger.

The three years spent at William Horlick High School were happy learning years. In selecting a fine-arts class, Bill decided on Stagecraft which truly led the way to his future life's work. Mr. Joe Mooney, the teacher, was surely one of his favorites. Bill never missed a day of high school and even went to school with his pockets stuffed with kleenex when he had a cold. There were always plays and programs he was working on and he just couldn't miss one day. During his senior year, due to a government grant, the school received a black & white television camera. Bill was in 7th heaven and helped build a control booth up behind the stage. Many of the school activities were taped and shown later in the commons area during lunch hour. Naturally, Bill chose a communications major when he entered the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

Those university years seemed to fly by and Bill made many new friends, including Jeff, Craig and Butch, plus long time pal Dean, who were all his roommates. After graduation, Bill returned to Racine to work for the Unified School System, then on to Chicago Lutheran General Hospital before being encouraged by Dan Mueller to come out to California and team up with him.

In another chapter, Dan has filled us in on the progression of Bill's career and his eventual position with Visual Services. He was very happy producing shows for the auto industry and truly realizing his potential.

It seems like such a waste of all that wonderful talent to have his life snuffed out in his prime. He had a very caring personality and made so many great friends which we have had the pleasure of meeting. We are forever grateful for the wonderful friendship of Bonnie Baird who always checked in with Bill on weekends to see if he was free to go to a movie or take in an art exhibition. It was so great of Laura Maurer, a friend in Chicago, to arrange and join Bill for a trip to France in the summer of 1995. I hope we will continue to hear a bit of news or catch a glimpse of some of them as the years flow by.

Yes, Bill, there is definitely a big gap in our lives at the moment, but we do have so many of your special possessions to enjoy. You will always be with us in spirit. It was our pleasure to say you were ours, we did love you so much.

Your Mom

I first met Bill just before Christmas in 1954. He was just a little guy, if you can believe that, and he would just lay in one spot and sleep most of the time. I liked him from the start because he respected me as an older brother. We established this respect when I walked into his room with my new tin drum. His reactions were really good. I would beat the drum four or five times and his eyes would get real big. I didn't think this was a real bad thing to do, but I never did it when Mom and Dad were around.



I can't recall a lot of funny or specific little stories about Billy. He was born right before Christmas of 1954 when I was four and a half. It was very exciting to have a baby under the tree - I loved dolls. While Mom bathed her new baby I was right there next to them, lathering one of many baby dolls.



Bill didn't do anything that was very memorable in the next few years, that is, until we moved from Kingston Ave. to N. Wisconsin St. In all the confusion that takes place when you move, no one noticed Bill getting his hands on a tube of red lipstick and our cat, Mr. Whiskers, at the same time. Whiskers was a black and white cat, so it wasn't too hard to figure out where all the red marks on the carpet were coming from. And Bill, because he was covered with lipstick too, finally joined Maureen and me as a maker of poor kid-type decisions.



My family moved into the neighborhood when I was three years old. I can't remember when the O'Shaughnessy's moved in but it had to have been about the same time, as playing with Bill is one of my earliest recollections. We had a great neighborhood with many young families and an endless

supply of friends. Just in our immediate area there were a number of us who were close buddies, Sam Cicero, John Sheriff, Jack Lindsay, to name a few. I like to think that we were all best of friends. And we only had to go to the next street or around the block to find an additional supply. I can remember that the same was true for our brothers and sisters. There was always someone to play with or something going on.



Like many growing up in the affluent 1950's, Bill had an idyllic childhood - nice safe neighborhood with elm-lined streets, Mom at home making cookies, Dad with one company his whole career, two parents married to each other forever, and we all got along. Our dinner hours were to be treasured. My husband, Bob, always joked about us being like the Cleavers or the Nelsons (Ozzie & Harriet), but we really were that way. That's the kind of family Bill was born into. His death was really the only tragedy our little family has experienced. I guess we're pretty lucky.



Bill's early years were different from a lot of kids in that he didn't drag around blankets or teddy bears, he dragged around extension cords. And he didn't stop with one or two, he pulled around 4 or 5 of various lengths, many of which should have been attached to living room lamps.



Billy was an adorable little kid - chubby rosy cheeks, blue eyes, freckles, strawberry-blond hair (complete with cowlick), and always smiling. He carried the ubiquitous electric cord everywhere he went. Billy was always busy, always had a project going. He had the infamous WBBO (William Billy Brian O'Shaughnessy) radio station, a fully equipped chemistry laboratory (pronounced la bor' a tor y), cords everywhere...lucky for him he had free run over the basement.



Bill's first real experience with electricity came while Uncle John McCormick was telling me wildly exaggerated tales about Alaska. Bill decided to suck on a plugged-in extension cord. We heard a funny squeal and there sat Bill with his eyes bugged out, just like he looked when I "played" the drum several years earlier.

It was shortly after this that Bill staged his first crowd stopping show. We went to Fence Lake every summer for vacation, and we always shopped at Beller's Supermarket in Woodruff before going the final 10 miles to the lake. It was about noon and Beller's was packed, with long lines at all six checkouts. There was a lot of noise coming from the checkout girls as they called out prices and from the noisy cash registers, and then there was silence. All six registers had stopped. For about a minute, everyone just stood looking at each other while Mr. Beller ran around frantically trying to find the problem. Then I heard the words, "Where's Bill?" Well, he was about 3 feet from all of us, squatting under the checkout counter with a cord in his hand, and it wasn't his

cord. Everyone in the store thought it was pretty funny, except for Mr. Beller.



I could never order my little brother around too much, except during summer vacations when we were about five or ten. We had elaborate backyard plays and circuses and when the curtain rose, he was willing and able to be popcorn vendor, bit player, gopher and publicist armed with posters and scotch tape. And, of course, Bill was in charge of sound and lighting...early signs of a budding career. We had lots of fun beneath the cherry and plum trees in our backyard theater.



I always looked up to my brother Billy and not just because he was so tall, but because of the example he set for me. Just within this last year

Bill told me that after eight years my birth had bumped him out of his youngest-of -the-family spot, but I never felt any animosity from him. He did tease me a little, though. Some of his favorites were “do you want to have a picnic?” and then he’d pull the blanket out from under me or he would say, “I’ll give you a nickle if you can get the blanket off my head,” and when I almost had it off he’d say, “time’s up.” And I was always a sucker for 52 card pick up. Billy also dubbed me with the nickname “Toad” because I would sit on my feet at the dinner table to be taller.



Bill had the neatest house in the neighborhood. A big old stone mammoth with a drooping English village roof line framing the second story windows. The sunken living room had a high vaulted ceiling with a small balcony out of the west wall that connected with the upstairs hallway. I remember that the house seemed very large to me with a lot of really neat places to get into. Bill’s mom always kept the house very neat and we

always did our best to increase the entropy. I guess I don't really recall ever getting scolded for messing things up, but I'll bet Bill did.



The next stage in Bill's life I call the "Radio Stage." Our basement had a fruit cellar/storage room that became home to WBBO Radio (which stood for William-Billy-Brian-O'Shaughnessy). Bill and his buddies, Richard and Sammy, would search the neighborhood on garbage day for old TV's and radios to salvage the speakers from. Consequently, we had speakers in almost every heat vent and cold air return in the house. Fortunately, Bill didn't have an amplifier to make the speakers very loud. Unfortunately, Bill's wiring ran from the vents to the three-story laundry chute. No one realized this was a problem until a lot of socks and underwear turned up missing. Bill's wiring had a million knots and splices in it, and the missing underwear was caught on these in the clothes chute.



My love for music really grew through Billy. One of my first memories with him - I must have been about five - was in his WBBO radio station in our basement. He was probably babysitting me. Billy put headphones on me and played different types of pop rock to see what I liked best. I believe his verdict was that I liked something fast and upbeat. A few years later he took me with to Hi Fi Fo Fum in Milwaukee. I was honored. We sat in bean bag chairs and listened to wall-shaking music on the latest in stereo equipment. Something none of my school age friends would ever experience with their close-in-age siblings.



How does one begin to collect, arrange and communicate his thoughts, memories and feelings for a man who made such a significant impact on your life? I'm not sure I'm emotionally ready, able

or up to such a task, but here it goes.

Bill O'Shaughnessy changed my life in many ways. He introduced me to many of the things I truly love in life: music, theatre, family, friends. If there is one thing Bill taught me, it was how to live every moment of every day to its fullest. As trite and prophetic as this may sound, Bill held true to this belief his whole life. I only hope that in some small way that I can do the same.

As one of Bill O'Shaughnessy's friends since childhood, I feel a collection of short takes on life with Bill during the early seventies is a way to help remember him as I'm sure much of what will appear in this book will be from periods later in his life.

In the thirty years I knew Bill, we went through quite a lot together. Good times and bad. But every experience left a mark on me and the people we both knew. What follows are short takes, memories, and brief anecdotes. They may have an impact on some of you – especially if you went through them with Bill and I – or they may not. Either way, they are glimpses of a friendship that grew to be very important to me.

I do know one person who will recollect every story, and hopefully by retelling them, a smile may cross his face, as it has mine.

WBBO Radio and Why I went into Broadcasting

My earliest memory of Bill occurred on a warm summer day when a childhood friend of mine, Randy Schuppe, introduced me to a tall, gangly redhead. It was cool in Bill's basement on Wisconsin Avenue, a welcome relief from the humid Racine heat. Randy led me into a small room behind the furnace. There, I was greeted by Bill as he sat in his make-shift radio station, complete with microphones, a control board, turntable, monitor speakers and a stack of 45's. I immediately fell in love with the new toy at my fingertips, the atmosphere, and the potential.

Throughout the summer I "worked" at WBBO radio. The call letters stood for *William Brian Bill O'Shaughnessy*. Odd, but effective. Bill was the disk jockey, I the technical grunt. I soon became enamored with the sounds of Motown, Rock n' Roll and Bill Cosby. Yes, even Bill needed a break from music now and then.

In the years to come, the O'Shaughnessy basement became a place where our imaginations ran wild. I soon graduated to disk jockey under the watchful eye of the more learned and experienced station owner.

Just a few of the many experiences we shared during the following formidable years:

- ☺ Building a replica womb out of wood and carpet after a trip to the Wustum Museum where we were exposed to an artistic rendering of the same.
- ☺ Band concerts in his backyard – with me on trombone, Robin Romanshek on tuba and Bill conducting.
- ☺ Spooking Sam Cicero through his bedroom window practically every summer evening.
- ☺ Bonfires at the beach at the end of Melvin avenue.
- ☺ Riding our bikes, everywhere.
- ☺ Building a slide in the manhole that ran from the garage to the basement as an alternate means of entry.
- ☺ Devouring stereo equipment magazines while downing root beers.
- ☺ A triple-spouted water fountain with large gold fish, strategically placed next to the grape arbor.
- ☺ Monopoly games that lasted late into the evening. (Especially the one where I, in a laughing fit, fell over backwards in a rocking chair and kicked the game, complete

with hotels and stacks of 500's, high into the air).

- ☺ Eating open-faced sandwiches at noon in the warm sunlit kitchen.
- ☺ Enduring loud basement rehearsals for the band "A Change of Color."
- ☺ Watching Charlie Chan movies on Sunday morning.
- ☺ The first true New Year's celebration.

By the time we reached high school, Bill and I were almost inseparable. There, Bill introduced me and many of our friends to the wonders of the theatrical stage. But it was those early days at the helm of the powerful WBBO control board that shaped my future, and forever cemented the name of Bill O'Shaughnessy into my life.



From radio, we moved to the Chemistry Stage. Dad worked for Johnson Wax which had a big laboratory complex. As they got new equipment in the early 60's, they gave a lot of the old stuff away. WBBO became a thing of the past and the

best equipped home chemistry lab in Racine was born. We never had any great explosions but we did have a few good “pops.” “Dr. Beaker”, as we called Bill then, also created some terrible odors that I got to sleep with, since my bedroom was in the basement not too far from the lab.



In the basement there was a series of rooms that I imagine now would have made a nice workroom or utility room. Bill completely took over that area and turned it into our “project area”. There was a fruit cellar which became the chemistry room. Bill had a great layout there and, as we grew, we often played around with little chemistry-set type of experiments. It is God’s will alone that kept us from burning that house down with a few of those hair-brained “experiments.”

There was another room that was located under the garage intended for storage of firewood. Connected to the basement by a small door, it was connected to the garage by a manhole. It was too neat to imagine. We did all sorts of great things

and played many great games using that passage way. The main room had the furnace in it. It was not elegant or finished, but Bill would completely transform it into a continuous string of different and varied scenes. It might be the helm of a spaceship or it might be a television studio. And when I say he transformed it, I mean he *really* transformed it. He would build props and backdrops with lighting, levers and dials. He would visualize things and transform them into reality using paper, cardboard and whatever he had around.

Looking back on it I think Bill's conceptual abilities, seeing it all coming together and making it happen, were well ahead of his time. I remember that our parents were proud of the things we were doing although I imagine now that they probably didn't appreciate the mess and they were probably always wondering where the tape, paper and string went. Second thought, I imagine they knew.



Bill developed his skills with electricity early on, having wires running through and around the

house for all sorts of uses. Television was clearly an early love for Bill. At all times of the year he would set up a mock television station in the basement and recruit us to do the news or weather. He'd set up remote equipment and we'd pretend to go on location and report on all sorts of events that we'd make up or see. As we got older the props and equipment got more and more sophisticated. I have to wonder what the rest of the neighborhood thought. I remember it as lots of fun and as experiences that I feel prepared us in many ways for our respective futures.



Some of Bill's other early questionable moments weren't actually related to the electrical, radio, and chemistry stages of his childhood, but they deserve mention. One involved an extremely hot day in early June when Bill and his buddy Richard tried to hatch some robin's eggs they found. The furnace had been running for hours before anyone came home that day, and it was about 100° in the house. Without air conditioning, it took days for

the house to cool down. The eggs never hatched. One of Bill's most remarkable early developments was a club or group that he founded called AUNTIE. Originally it was Bill, a mutual friend Eileen Thomas and I. It was, of course, developed as an echo of the "Man From UNCLE" series on TV and was driven by the love that Bill had for gadgetry of all kinds and the weekly introduction of new gadgets on the show. This got "very serious" and we continued this for many years. As far as I know I'm still a member. We had a great time transforming Bill's basement into "headquarters". I remember that we were able to convert many of the studio props and equipment and put them to other appropriate uses. This would be augmented with various spy technologies. It all seemed quite elaborate. Most of our other friends were brought into the fold and took part in the activities.



The Art of Halloween

Nobody enjoyed a show like Bill. And what better time and place to stage a show than Halloween.

For a few years running, Bill's parents were kind enough to let us convert their fine home into a Haunted House on Halloween. Our theatrical minds, backed by some excellent effects, made the O'Shaughnessy home the one to see on those gruesome holidays.

Sheet metal thunder strips; choreographed "murders" in front of strobe lights; amplified eerie effects, screams and music; and a "blood"-filled fire extinguisher helped ensure that every kid who ventured by the haunted O'Shaughnessy house would have trouble sleeping for many nights to come.

To this day, I'm surprised we were never featured in the local newspaper.



Leave it to Bill and Richard again, to become pioneers in the use of the first "900" numbers. I was real glad my name wasn't Bill when we got a \$200 phone bill that month. Bill and Richard had been calling the 900 weather service number in Portage three to five times a day for a month.



Bill had a great yard as well. I remember playing pick-up football games in the big side yard with Bill, his brother Shelly, and an extended group of our neighborhood friends. Sometimes it was baseball, sometimes it was golf. Bill's dad took a lot of pride in their lawn. I'll bet he cringed whenever the group of us set up to play some game or another. I think all of our parents were really decent in that I can never remember having anyone's parents complain about our playing or otherwise giving us grief.



Our parents really did a lot with us. I remember Bill's dad taking him to Indian Guides. I always wished I could go along with them. They were in it for quite a few years, going to the meetings, going to camp. I loved American Indian culture and lore as a kid and it was enjoyable to watch

them going to the meetings all dressed up. I also remember them going to Armstrong Park which was a private park the O'Shaughnessy's belonged to through his father's work. There was golf and a number of other activities there. Bill loved going there and would tell us all of the details of the things they did. They took me along on a number of occasions. I have one special memory where they took me along there to an ice skating party. It was a great kind of a winter afternoon full of memories and friends.



While I can't think of any great "dumb" things Bill did after this, my 14 year-old brother did manage to get my 21st birthday party raided by the Racine police. While Mom and Dad were in Ireland with Gammie (my grandmother) and aunt Marg, the kids were left back in Racine. My friends and I were in the backyard with some beer and a loud stereo, while Bill, Richard again, Sam, and others were out in the street with a case of Johnson's Glory Rug Cleaner. One of the neighbors, Sam's

mother no less, thinking vandals were spray-painting cars, called the police. Thanks again, Bill, for that “on the spot training” of how to talk to the cops when you’ve been drinking.

The fact that I went away to college in 1965, when Bill was 11, limits my stories. However, I’m sure my younger sisters, with their keen sense of memory, have a few they can add to mine.



As we were growing up our bicycles were our connection to the “outside world”. We went everywhere on our bikes. Often times we would go as a group to the lake shore or to some distant field to play army or just to explore. I’d have a fit if one of my kids was climbing around on the rocks along the lake shore with a bunch of his crazy friends. I’m glad our parents didn’t know. Maybe it is better that I don’t know now! Bill liked to build forts and there was no better place than the old field by North Bay to find a good grassed-in ditch that would be suitable with the right piece of old plywood over the top. Bill would

of course have some sophisticated periscope or weapons system that would help us to effectively stalk or defeat our “enemy”. These were great times.

At about age 12 we started our first rock band. Bill was never much for performing and I don't even know if he played an instrument. He was the natural fit as the sound man, light man, and manager. A lot of us stuck with it through high school as Bill moved on to bigger and better things. Especially when he went to high school and found out that there was a theater with big time audio and video equipment to be mastered.



I followed in Billy's footsteps and fine example in many ways. I sang in the church choir as he had, worked on the lighting for a couple of plays at Horlick High School, and I went to U.W. Madison. I loved visiting Bill in Madison and I knew Madison was where I wanted to go to college after seeing Billy there. Bill did a jazz show for WORT while he was in college and I was in Jr. High. In

eighth grade I did a comparison between Bill's show and a jazz show out of Milwaukee for an assignment. I was so proud of my brother the D.J.



I was especially saddened to learn of the recent death of Bill. In my more than thirty years of teaching at Horlick High School, he was one of the most memorable students whom I had in class. I recall his sense of duty and courtesy, his willingness to do more than his share, and a demonstrable kindness, concern, and tolerance toward others - qualities too seldom shown by high school students. Surely these were characteristics which reflected a family that cared as well as an indication of his own innate behavior.

I am very proud to have had Bill in my class, and I mourn that his life was so short.



Bill's white bike with the long, bent seatpost

I can remember before I met Bill, I saw this tall skinny guy on a white bike that looked to be

two or three sizes too small. The seat post was very long and bent. When I met Bill, I realized that this was the guy with the white bike.



I had just started my first semester at UW Madison, and after a rousing night on State Street, I returned to Ogg hall, the dorm where Jeff, Craig, Stu, Roger and I, along with 500 other students were living. It was about 2:00 AM when I felt this rumble throughout the building, and not only did it persist, but seemed to be getting louder. I crawled out of my bunk to investigate, and wandered into the hallway. I noticed that the sound seemed to get more intense as I approached the other side of the dorm, and as I arrived at the source I realized the rumbling was from the bass on Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon." I decided to knock, and after a few seconds the door opened, and smoke poured into my face. A tall, lanky redhead introduced himself as Bill, and his stocky friend as Bun. Now I won't pretend to hide the fact that we didn't smoke a little reefer back

then, but it was only for recreational purposes, and in retrospect totally harmless. They invited me in and I asked Bill about his stereo, which sounded amazing. It turned out he was an audiophile, who followed the latest advances in amplifiers, turntables, speakers and audio equipment. I was very naive about technology at the time, but a fascination with sound became a spark for our initial friendship. That's when I got my first insight into Irish's personality, as he explained *in very meticulous* detail the various specifications of his sound system, and I could totally relate. Over the years it would remain a mutual connection, as we both ended up working in tech oriented fields, and we both appreciated a killer sound system, as well as a great dinner and good bottle of wine. Once a gearhead...always a gearhead.



Our path's crossed a number of times in high school and college years. We had some friends in common but our interests took us in different directions. We always remained friends and never were at a loss for things to talk about or memories to relive. I had only seen Bill a few times since then as we went on to different cities. I continue

to hold all of our memories close to my heart and I celebrate the importance and impact that Bill had on my life. He lives on as that part in all of us who knew him.



One day in Ogg Hall someone said that there was a guy named Bill living on the same floor as Butch & Stu. He had a shock of red hair.

His name was Bill and he had a real stereo with tall speakers.

He was tall with long thin legs.

He had a shelf full of chemistry beakers & bottles, glass tubes & rubber tubes.

He had a real stereo and he was Bill.



Pink Floyd filling the hallways of Ogg Hall

My very first memory of Bill (fall of 1973) is hearing Pink Floyd coming down the hallway in Ogg Hall. For a week or so it was a mystery who it was who had the great stereo down the hall, then I finally met Bill.



He joined Council 6568 and the Knights of Columbus on March 2, 1974, thus making him one of the Charter Members of our Council. As a member he was very active in the many early programs of the Council, and was a part of the building of Chalet Coyle at Coyle's Woods. Bill was known in the Council for his quick Irish Wit and, of course, his Irish red hair, and helped establish the Council as truly "A Fraternity With A Purpose."



High School, College and Beyond

I'm sure many people thought of me as Bill's shadow in high school. Actually, I just enjoyed the things he did, and what we did together. In reality, we are two very different individuals with the same interests.

From high school through college, Bill and I remained close friends. And while we moved to different cities after graduation, we continued to

stay in touch. Several trips to the west coast resulted in good visits over a fine meal and a glass of wine. While the passage of time showed on our faces, each visit seemed as if only a week had passed, instead of years.



*Hanging out in Racine after the King Crimson/
Robin Trower concert (summer 1974)*

Stu Dahl, Craig Sines, Thom Gay, Eric Wentorf, Butch Vig, Packy (can't for the life of me recall his real name), Irish, and I bought tickets for this concert at the PAC in Milwaukee by mail order. We got lucky and they received our order just after they added a second show, so we got great seats, 3rd row right in the center. Great concert and I'll always remember the picture of Bill in his bathrobe outside his parents house the next day.



"Bill, wake up!!"

Bill decided to take a mid-party nap on the

bathroom floor at my folks house during the summer of 1974.



Fittingly, Bill's room on Bowen Ct. was beside the front door, like a concierge's station (not that any of us knew what that was). It was layered in golds and rusts and browns...earthy - it was the 70's, you know. The rest of us living there, seemingly a little less tidy than Bill, had browns the color of dirt.

Coming home one day we found Bill trying to make the place more livable by nailing an accent strip of cork to the living room wall.



We went down a back staircase to the bar, which I remember as being in the middle of the room.

Bill chose a stool and sat down. Across the bar and thru an arch we could see a pool table in the next room. A player - a decade older than us and well dressed - looked up at us and paused. He set

his cue down deliberately and, without taking his eyes off us, came toward the bar.



Weekends at Bowen Court (1974/1975)

From time to time we would have a houseful of folks for the weekend - especially for Badger football games. Lots of Racine people would visit and as always, Irish made it easy for everyone to get to know each other and have a lot of fun together.



He didn't care much for dirty old dishes, the kind with dried-on coats of sauce that you couldn't even tell what kind of food it came from - rock-hard chunks of pale green, sort-of-yellow-brown-like-cement leftovers with soft & feathery tufts of

mounded mold.

After waiting a polite period, Bill wasn't at all beyond tucking the plates & pots & pans & all into the offender's bed.



One year we had a Halloween party at Irish's when he was living on West Washington Ave. in Madison, and it was a very interesting party. Bill Swan and I had gone to Utah skiing the year before and met a very eccentric character by the name of Dave Weiss. We liked Dave a lot, but to say he was eccentric was putting it mildly. He was a straight A student at the UW, but had a difficult time dealing with everyday social situations and didn't always use a lot of tact. I remember one time Dave, Irish, my girlfriend Carol Stephens and I were sitting on the porch of our "Animal House" on Bowen Ct. and Dave said, or should I say blurted out extremely loud "Carol...do you have anyone who will go out with me... I masturbate 5 times a day!" Needless to say Irish and I almost fell over backwards. So when we heard

Dave was coming to the Halloween party, we didn't know what to expect. Almost everyone who came had on a mask or costume, but when Dave showed up, he had "designed" his costume from scratch, which consisted of a black plastic garbage bag and charcoal smeared all over his body. On the bag he had painted "The Living Dead" in white letters, and throughout the night he would blurt out to anyone in earshot "I'm the living dead." I know this story isn't really going anywhere, but it was a great Halloween party. Irish and I laughed so long and so hard that night that when we woke up the next day I could barely move because my ribs were so sore.



When I met Bill I was producing educational television for the Racine School System. He came in looking for summer work between his junior and senior years of college. He was this tall, skinny kid with a huge helmet of red hair. That summer I learned of Bill's incredible technical skills and his love of music. I also learned of his dry wit and tireless energy.



Ron Cuzner

Ron was a jazz disk jockey in Milwaukee that Bill interviewed around 1977. Ron's radio show was on real late at night so a few of us (I think it was Eric Wentorf, Mike Stellmacher, and I) dropped him off at the radio station around midnight and picked him up again at 1:30 or so. We lost a chunk of tread off of my car tire on the way home and went "cachunk, cachunk, cachunk" all the way home to Madison.

Ron was a big influence on Bill and Bill's weekly jazz spots from Madison were inspired by Ron's radio shows. Most of what I know about jazz (which admittedly is not much), I learned from Irish. He loved jazz and I can't help but think of him whenever I hear jazz, especially Miles Davis.



Backgammon games



How can one even begin to try to put into words the good times with Bill O'Shaughnessy (affectionately known as Irish to many friends)? We had fun with Bill, ate and drank with Bill, learned from Bill, and to tell you the truth, became better people because of it.

Bill possessed a real ability (no, make that a gift) to befriend many different people and make an event with people who didn't know each other very comfortable. I attended functions with Bill in Racine and Chicago and they were always fun and very well planned, with great food and drink (Irish the Webermaster - the grilled turkeys are an institution), great conversation, great music, well, you get the idea. But I also met a lot of great people and it was always nice to talk with Irish's friends who were a diverse group.



Buck and Shrimp

Buck and Shrimp were two Racine friends of Bill's (Dave Johnson and Mr. Tracy (first name

escapes me)) who played in a country flavored duo. Bill had recorded a “video” (this was probably in '79 or so) of them performing. As usual, Bill was ahead of his time because music video's had not hit the mainstream yet.



I met Bill shortly after I had graduated from Madison. We became good friends quickly. Since our vocation and avocations were the same we had many areas of common interest.

Bill made an immediate impact on my life in many ways. From a professional standpoint we had many work-related projects that we shared our experiences on. We also both loved cooking and entertaining and we shared that passion with our mutual friends. We loved to debate, pontificate and discuss a wide array of topics.

When Bill moved to Chicago we spent a great deal of time together. Since he initially moved down the street from me we often had dinner together. We also shared a mutual interest in music both live and recorded. We would often sit around cooking, drinking beer and listening to

music or going out to see live music. Since we both worked in similar professions we would often touch base about things relating to work or projects we wanted to work on.

One of Bill's great abilities was to pull people together. He had many friends and always seemed to find a way to have parties or coordinate social gatherings that would include everyone. This had a profound influence on many of us since this spirit tended to widen our network of friends.

As Janet and I sat around recently watching the "green Chicago river," the parade and all the festivities that are part of St. Patrick's day our thoughts turned to "Irish". I always spent time looking around for a funny card to send him. We would always talk on this day. When he lived in Chicago he threw one of the best parties I have ever been to on St. Patrick's Day. He got folks from Madison, Racine and Chicago to gather at his place and share the day. From now on St. Patrick's Day will have much less meaning to me.

I am glad that I had the opportunity to be Bill's friend. I will miss his friendship, wisdom, insight, sharp wit and wonderful sense of humor.

However, in his own special way Bill has insured through his network of friends and family that his spirit will continue on; that indeed is truly a tribute to the life he lived.

Bill's Bloody Mary

- ☺ Mix together an appropriate amount of vodka, tomato juice/bloody mary mix, Worcestershire sauce, dill weed, horseradish & celery salt, black pepper & Tabasco sauce.
- ☺ Serve over ice, garnish with celery stalk, pickle spear and olives and lime.
- ☺ Accompany with a beer chaser.



Dancing to Spooner

Spooner was a great Madison band with Butch Vig on drums that we went to see a lot.



A short time after I left the school system Bill took over. He then began a long career trying to explain to many of you what he did for a living. When

Bill was working for Unified School System in Racine he created hundreds of hours of educational television. He developed an entire series of programs that are still used today. But more than just doing this work, he had to juggle limited facilities, a bureaucracy that did not understand and a declining budget. Instead of complaining or lowering expectations, Bill moved forward. In fact, through his technical and creative abilities he created one of the first interactive educational television programs by combining an Apple computer, video tape deck and a television. Bill also spent countless hours at the Racine Theater Guild working on shows.

After a few years Bill moved on to develop video programs for a hospital in suburban Chicago. I saw him there a few times and what he seemed to enjoy most about the job was the opportunity to live in a large city. Bill enjoyed tremendously the theater, the restaurants, the museums and most of all the people he met there.



I met Bill O'Shaughnessy in spring of 1982. He was interviewing for a video producer position at Lutheran General Hospital in Chicago. I had

recently been hired as a photographer, and had just relocated from Wisconsin. Being fellow cheeseheads transplanted to a large metro area immediately gave us common ground for a friendship.

After Mr. Bill was hired, and we began to work together, the two of us quickly became friends. We found that besides being from Wisconsin, we had other common interests. Both of us enjoyed the same type of music, both were cat lovers, both liked modifying our stereo equipment (and secretly drilling holes through the landlord's closet to hide the speaker wires). A major bond was that we each liked to smoke pot, he had a terrific old Madison bong, I had the world's oldest roach clip. We were discovering all that Chicago had to offer.



After I was in college at Madison sometimes Billy would stay with me when he came to visit. It was usually on a weekend that Spooner was playing. I remember dancing and sweating hard into the night to Spooner at Headliners. One night Billy

was so hot he took off his shirt and danced in his sleeveless white T-shirt.

One summer while I was in college we went up to Minneapolis to see Bill's friend Stu Dahl in a play. It was great to be included and Billy liked driving company for good conversation. After Minneapolis we went on to visit the rest of the family at Squirrel Lake in Minocqua. The muffler fell off on the way. Bill laid in the ditch in his white jeans tying the muffler up with some rope he got from a farmer. The rope broke when we were almost to the house and as Bill parked the car the hot muffler blew out the back tire. We arrived with a bang just in time for dinner.



Thinking about Bill and remembering all the times our paths crossed over the years, I not only had the pleasure of having Bill as a friend, but vacationed with him, had dinners together, worked together at the Racine Theater Guild, and he would help me at my store from time to time. Bill was a person who never had a bad word to say about anyone and was always there when someone needed help.



Sunday afternoon was a warm, lazy, summer day. Bill and I were relaxing in my living room at 1823 Wesley, with a couple of tall vodka tonics. We agreed that we were a bit hungry, so I wandered into the pantry to grab some munchies. It was at that moment, something happened that sent Bill and I on a frantic one hour roller coaster ride.

I reached for a box of crackers on the shelf, hearing a horrible hissing sound. Turning to my left, I found myself staring into the face of a large, snarling opossum, who must have had the same case of the munchies we did.

I had never been that close to a possum before. Its teeth were large and its claws were very sharp. The rational thing to do would have been to call animal control...but Bill and I would have none of that. We sprang into action like big game hunters. I was armed with a broomstick, welders gloves, and a steel garbage can lid. Bill wore goggles and gloves and held a large box for transporting our uninvited guest back from where it came. Understand, we were both a little buzzed from the drinks, which enhanced the thrill of “the

hunt.” As I probed the beast with the broomstick, Bill strategically positioned himself with the box to trap the varmint. As you can imagine, our plan didn’t work as smoothly as we had hoped. I prodded, as Bill frantically tried to box up the critter...this lasted for close to an hour.

In its fear, the possum managed to expel nasty things from its body, into and onto every square inch of the kitchen. We finally managed to steer the intruder into Bill’s path, and he boxed it up with great skill. Bill then ran down the stairs, box in tow, and released the possum back into the wild.

After we caught our breath and cleaned up the mess in the kitchen, we did what we knew we had to do...MORE COCKTAILS! Sitting on the front porch this time, we laughed hysterically at the afternoon’s fiasco.

This is a story Bill and I often recalled over the following years to come.

Bill we love you and miss you.



Working & playing together gave me an insight into Bill that would not be apparent to a non-co-worker. I discovered early in our relationship that

he was gay. A fact that our ex-co-workers still do not know or accept. I began to meet some of his gay friends and he began to meet mine. Including my then-girlfriend, Laura.

Mr. Bill was a great host. I am certain all the individual stories in this book include details of a dinner Bill prepared, or the after-dinner liquors that were offered, or the entree that was perfectly grilled. After a few of these events, the “perfect host” aspect of Bill became a given.

I attended my first large gay party at one of these events. Being one of the few heterosexuals in the crowd, I was initially intimidated. After a few beers, I became relaxed and expected a totally diverse crowd at any party Bill would host.



Many turkeys on many grills



I am fortunate to have known Bill O’Shaughnessy for so many years. We met in 1983 around the time when we had both landed in Chicago. I, having just finished art school in New York, was

happy to have a “creative” friend. He was the epitome of an easy-going Midwesterner (and a fellow Wisconsinite).

Bill was always the greatest host. I recall many an enjoyable evening at his place. When he moved out to L.A., we stayed in touch. I do think that we became closer friends as time went by. He is the person I would call when I wanted another opinion. He always had such a level head and was so unbiased about people. Bill is without a doubt the most well-balanced healthy gay guy that I have ever known. His friends are a diverse group of people - straight and gay. He had a way of reaching out and touching so many lives.



The potato gun on New Year's Eve

Bill stopped in on New Year's Eve ('84 or '85 or so) and brought a gag gift - a potato gun. You took the tip of the gun and stuck it into a raw potato, and then the spud projectile would fly across the room when you pulled the trigger.



Scouring Chicago for a plunger

Bill had a St. Patrick's day party in Chicago ('85 or so) before he moved to LA. The next day another guest (who shall remain nameless but you know who you are) had clogged the john, so we had to find, in Chicago on a Sunday, a toilet plunger. As usual, Bill knew right where to go and we had a successful journey to the hardware store).



I was fired from the hospital about six months before Bill left for California. We each became freelancer vendors at about the same time in our lives. Although I did not see Bill for several years after his move to Los Angeles, we kept in touch. The first time I visited him was just after he moved to Hollywood Hills. The California lifestyle seemed to suit Bill. I have known quite a

few mid-westerners that relocated out west, and eventually about half move back (including myself). But Bill was made for California. Not that he was a typical Californian.



I think that most of us considered Bill to be very conservative, not a risk taker. But then he did something that seemed out of character. He left his secure job at the hospital and friends in Chicago for Los Angeles. I think Bill did this because he wanted to explore, to reach beyond the limitations that had confined his creativity. And so he came to Los Angeles, and he lived with my wife and I for some months. In Los Angeles he started to freelance, that is work from job to job. While freelancing Bill worked as a photographer, a television director, a graphic designer, a producer, a variety of things. Freelancing is a tough field. People don't want to hire you unless they know you and when you are new to the area, as Bill was, you really have to hustle. And Bill knew how to hustle. It wasn't long before he was working quite regularly.



Enough randomness. I hope, though, that these snippets at least begin to portray what an interesting and interested person that Bill was. He had a lot of interests, and really had a love for life that rubbed off on everyone that he came into contact with. After Bill moved to California, we didn't get to see him that often but it always seemed like it had just been yesterday when we last saw each other. Most years, we would call Bill on St. Patrick's day because we always thought of him then.

What can I say, we miss you dearly and feel so fortunate that you were a great friend. Without a doubt, you made this world a better place for us and for many others.



One New Year's Eve Spooner played at Turner Hall. I left the dense crowd to talk with Bill and

Pat Lew on the dressing room couch. Rousers people draped themselves here and there as if they were in on something.

The next morning we jumped up and took our hangovers to Larry Jensen's house for a New Year's Day party. Pat was the one that stayed behind; she just wanted a peaceful day at home.

Anyway, after a couple of early drinks at Larry's, Butch and Bruce Kuehn started to sing Herb Alpert songs, even calling Betty in Viroqua to get the words. I'm sure other things happened, but I'm unsure. We may have eaten something.

By early evening we were ready to careen back to Butch's apartment to try and drag Pat out to dinner somewhere. She seemed surprised to see us. While I borrowed a Z-104 tee-shirt from Butch to wear to dinner, Bill lumbered onto Pat's lap. She seemed surprised again, only this time smaller. Bill somehow leveled his stare, looking her straight in the eye from inches away. She declined our glittering invitation.

That was a good thing because dinner at the Second Story went down hill. Someone flailed his arms thru the air. Someone launched a boat of sauce. Someone offered to pay to have the waiter's trousers cleaned.

Although Bill was not exactly a leveling influence that night, the worst of it didn't seem to stick to him, either. As always, he was a calm center to our confusions. And other than a little wince, he could even contain his embarrassment whenever the sauces flew.



I have a photograph I carry with me wherever I go. It's a snapshot Irish took of Patty and me goofing around in our backyard on Morrison St. He was visiting from LA, and we had a few friends over for a barbecue. It's nothing special really, just a shot of Patty sneaking up behind me and whispering something in my ear. But it seems to define a certain innocence as well as capturing a moment in time. Irish wrote on the back "Madison, summer of '87." It's one of my favorite photographs.



Maybe he was just tired. It was late when we dropped he and Jeff off at Jeff's house on Mifflin St. But it seemed so odd to see that expression on Bill's face as he walked thru the headlights, look-

ing back toward our car. He usually never let himself show that kind of expression, that kind of long face of private longing or uncertainty. Maybe he was just tired.



Bill came back to Madison to visit on a regular basis. He spent many a night on my sofa. Fortunately it was a long one and he didn't have to scrunch up too much. He never complained. On one of those visits, I went to work to pick up my paycheck while Bill waited at my apartment. After picking my check I went back out to my car. It was winter and it was snowing. I started my car to get it warming up while I cleaned off the snow. Unthinkingly, I locked my car while it was running. I walked back to my apartment to pick up my spare keys. Bill had a rental car, so he was going to give me a ride back to my car. Bill started his car to get it warmed up while we cleaned the snow off. We never knew how he did it, but he locked the keys in his car with it running, too. We had many a good laugh about having two cars running with their keys locked inside!



His abilities were recognized to the point where Visual Services Incorporated offered him a job. He became a producer at that company. A job I think he was made for and a job he loved. He grew quickly in that position. He soon was in charge of projects that launched new car lines. He managed budgets in excess of a million dollars and directed dozens of professionals, many of whom he had previously freelanced for to create giant shows. Many of you have not seen Bill's work, but let me give you some perspective. The shows were like the large award shows you see on television. They combined a complex system of light, sound and special effects. Many times Bill had to deal with stars who were brought in as entertainment. These projects took months of planning. And as a final challenge, the shows were always at a location that was not a studio or theater. This means everything had to be brought in and set up. With all this pressure Bill did not only survive, he thrived. He was really preparing for this role throughout his early career - his understanding of technology, his ability to continually get more out of less, but

most of all his ability to deal with people. Instinctively you trusted Bill, and that really made the difference. He was warm, thoughtful, caring.



In mid August of 1989 Bill's partner Heath died suddenly of AIDS. Bill called me very upset over Heath's death and that is when I learned Bill was HIV positive. The news was very devastating, but Bill was still in good health and very hopeful. We called each other more after that and usually ended the conversation with "I love you," something we had felt, but hardly ever said before.



Bill was quite wonderful. I miss him greatly. We shared so many times together. Countless dinners. I loved it when Bill would cook for me. It was one of the greatest expressions of his friendship and

love. Being a chef to have someone cook for me, well it made me feel loved.

I met Bill through Rick Carter. Rick was a man I met in Long Beach. We went on a date to an art gallery opening. It was Bill and Rick's friend Mary Lee and Marcy. It's where I met Bill first. Then we all went to Mumm's restaurant on Pine Ave. There was 12 or 14 of us. Ironically Bill became my friend and Rick became someone who I don't have any contact with or communication today. My friendship with Bill was gradual. He would invite me to dinners and gatherings of his work friends. Bill had a great propensity to bring people together. Mostly Bill and I would have meals together, that's what I feel we shared the most. We would also go to movies.

I can remember one incident where Bill and I were going somewhere and I was driving. He was giving me directions and was getting upset with me the way I was driving. He was really irritating me that night. He really could do that well. Haha! It wasn't so much that he was giving directions it was that he was so authoritative about it. This was what Bill would do quite often. He was right no matter what. If you disagreed with him, he would argue his point diligently. I really would get

worked up sometimes. Bill was very educated about many things. He had very strong convictions about his beliefs. It took Bill a long time to get you into his life. Once you were, you knew he was your friend. I am so flooded with emotions and memories. I can't seem to stay on a course of succession.

I loved sitting on Bill's patio while he would be grilling something on that Weber. He gave me his grill. I felt it was a great extension of Bill. He loved to entertain. I remember the ever growing morning glories. They added so much. Whenever I cook on it I think of him. I remember when he had a big party and grilled a whole stuffed turkey. It was delicious. I think the fact that we were both Midwesterners gave us another connection. Bill also gave me several of his rattan patio chairs with cushions. I have sat many times on them in my own backyard.

One memory was when Bill decided to change his bedrooms. Well there we were trying over and over and over to get this damn stinking cat hair infested couch back into that little room where he made his TV and Music room. Well it was pretty exhausting. No matter how many times we tried, that couch was not going to fit. Well my

allergies to cat hair flared up so bad, I started wheezing and coughing and sneezing. Bill had a prescription of Seldane that I would take on occasion to be in his house with him. There wasn't any more and I thought I was going to be rushed to the hospital. I went home and laid in bed for hours before I started to feel normal again. Bill's cat was such a lover to Bill. I remember going to Madison to see him and that cat stayed with Bill always. Bill loved that cat immensely. I remember how that cat would sit in the window when I would walk up the drive. It chewed up Bill's plants. Yet he loved it. I remember a couple of meals I cooked at Bill's house for him and Bonnie or Brad. Bill was so appreciative.

I remember the day Bill told me of his HIV status. It was a solemn day. I have experienced the loss of so many of my friends to that horrible disease. Bill had already been diagnosed for some time. We had known each other for 2 years at this time. I felt it was significant that he confided in me. It strengthened our friendship. The sad reality was that it was only a short time after that Bill started to experience sickness. Being HIV doesn't mean you have aids! I saw Bill go through all this with a lot of dignity. He also kept a lot to himself.

Which I felt he could have benefitted by a support group. But that was Bill's way.

I remember Bill started to tell more and more people about his HIV. I remember how he struggled to make the decision to go on leave from his work. Bill took enormous pride and care in his work. Bill was very fortunate in regards to the company he worked for. Not all were as supportive of Bill as his former employers were.

It was also interesting how he would travel to Detroit where I am from. Bill was committed to his job. It was a great source of his identity. I know his love for the theater was always there. I remember meeting John David in L.A. before he moved to Chicago. He and Bill exchanged quite a bit over John David's scripts and his book he was writing. I believe Bill had a great passion for the arts. It was fun how one Thanksgiving we all met in Chicago. How we had dinner together in their friend's home. The weather in Chicago was freezing. We had a good time. Bill's love of music was enormous. Especially jazz. He would make concessions sometimes because I couldn't take the high-pitched fusion kind.

I feel so sad over Bill not being here. I know his spirit is very much alive. I'm so glad I took that

trip to see him in Madison. I got to cook for him one more time. I met his friends. I loved the exchange we had at the farmer's market. I felt such a oneness that day. It was so painful to see the inevitable. I knew Bill would not survive AIDS. As much as I prayed I knew his time would come soon. He was so wise to return to a place where he could be cared for and be so loved. He loved his family so much and they he. I remember the last day I saw him in Long Beach before he moved to Wisconsin. We walked down the driveway and we said our good-byes. It's usually me who's crying, this time Bill was crying. It was so sad and yet I held him and loved him so much that day. I hate saying good-bye. I'm not going to close yet. This is how my memories and feelings are surfacing.

In so many ways Bill was a private man. He only let a few inside. The last two years of our friendship were the closest times. When Bill would tell me he loved me. I knew it was a true feeling. One that makes you glad to be alive.

What I will close with is my memory of Bill sitting in the royal blue love seat in his living room, with Karma sitting on the window sill. With the plants that Karma had chewed. All the magazines that Bill had in a stack. The metal

mobile on the table that I would play with. His fish tank and that lovely painting of the lemons. Bill's smiling at me and we're talking about our lives. He's served some of his brother's venison sausage and a plate of cheese. Cheese! The day the Packers won the Super Bowl, Bill had a party and greeted us wearing his cheesehead. God Bill, I love you always. I'm smiling at you now.



Subway into Chicago

Just before we moved to Manitowoc in 1992, Jeff Swiggum and Craig Sines brought Irish down from Madison to visit us in Schaumburg. We had a lot of fun taking the subway into Chicago and meeting Bill's good friend Laura Maurer for lunch in the Bucktown neighborhood. Taking the subway was a great way to see the city because you didn't have to watch your driving and you saw a whole different view than from the streets. Bill was interested in a lot of the architecture that we saw and this was a very memorable day. This was

one of my “last gasps” in the Chicago area before we moved and I’m glad I was able to spend it with Bill.



At Guild Books on Lincoln we stood around paging thru the “Modern Primitives” issue of Re:Search. Pointing and laughing, we held up photos of men held up by straps laced thru their muscle & skin. After awhile and other pictures we crossed the street and stood around the alley where Dillinger had been shot.



I met Bill in 1987. We were neighbors during the time he lived in Hollywood. Bill would watch my cats when I was out-of-town and I would return the favor.

After Bill moved to Long Beach we continued

our friendship. What I came to appreciate the most about spending time with Bill were our long, detailed, intellectual discussions about everything. I appreciated these discussions because we rarely completely agreed on anything. Be it politics, religion, or the movie we had just seen together. I know Bill also appreciated these discussions.

In California, Bill was known as the entertainer. At this time there is a large network of friends who would have never met had it not been for Bill, and his love for entertaining. After Bill's parties I usually had the privilege of doing the dishes. During those times, I can remember him sitting on the couch, and saying with a sigh, "What a wonderful evening, good friends, good food, good conversation."

I would like to say now, for his friends in California and myself, "Bill, thank you, for the good friendship, the good food and the good conversation."



Even though each of my trips to visit Bill was a pleasure trip for me, Bill made it a point to join as

many of my activities as possible. One of these visits included closing some Hollywood neighborhood bar, meeting a woman who that day passed the local bar exam after strip dancing her way through law school, proceeding to a mutual friend's sailboat, and taking the next several days off work, simply because it seemed like a good idea. One of my more pleasant meal-related memories occurred during this couple of days. After leaving the Getty Museum, we stopped for lunch at a restaurant directly across the Pacific Coast Highway. It was an extremely bright day. I recall all three of us having to return to the car to retrieve our sunglasses because it was blinding to sit outdoors. That lunch was quite memorable, lasted hours, and continues to be one strong memory of Bill.



In April of 1994 my children, husband and I spent Easter week at my parent's in Florida. Billy had business in Florida and spent Easter weekend with us. He told us in January his "counts" had

dropped below 200; he now had AIDS. Billy was thinner and tired. I woke up each night thinking about losing Billy and cried. When I talked to my mom in the morning she told me she had done the same. Bill's spirit was endless as he continued on with his life and his career. He said many times that his career helped keep him going.



Coffee House/Bookstore in Long Beach

I was in California on business in March of 1995 and went to Bill's house on a Saturday night. We had a nice dinner at an Italian restaurant and then walked to this coffee house/bookstore that had lots of easy chairs to relax in - a very casual spot. Earlier Bill had talked about some of the autoshows that he had produced and it was obvious that he really enjoyed his work and took a lot of pride in it.



In March of 1995 Billy gave Mimi and me plane tickets to visit him. He wined and dined us and

showed us the sights. We went to a taping of “Married with Children,” watched video discs, listened to music on Bill’s new speakers, and had late night talks. This was a time we made for each other thanks to Billy and it was great.



I will always laugh at the time Bill and I, having left the Orangerie in Paris, found an ideal spot to rest and take in the idyllic surroundings. He liked the shade and I liked the sun, so the park bench, being half and half, was perfect. We were enjoying a beautiful day when two big well-dressed French ladies with umbrellas told us to move. Once I figured out what they were saying in their thick French language I simply pointed to the ten empty benches nearby. This brought on a rage from one of the women who picked up our things and began pushing us off the bench! So we let them have it. A large group of school girls in uniform cheered as I sprinkled a very small amount of Evian water on the most obnoxious woman. As we looked back moments later, the

women were gone. We steered clear of older women with umbrellas after that.



These projects can sometimes force people to work incredible hours for days on end. A lot of producers excepted that as part of the job. Bill did not. He really cared about the people who worked for him and made every possible effort to make sure that they were taken care of. As one of those that he hired I really appreciated it and know that he was one of kind. At the end of one of these events, Bill would invite everyone who worked on it to his house for a party. He loved parties, especially the ones he threw. We would play back parts of the show, talk about the great moments and the embarrassing ones and for a moment really enjoy one another. I guess that is what I will miss about Bill. His love of people, his respect for the work we all did, and the importance he placed on savoring the good times.



We ate the most incredible food in France. On one three-hour dining extravaganza, the waiter brought a small wafer type dessert to the table and I said to Bill “this is dessert?” Bill said, “I think it’s the pre-dessert.” One meal had four desserts! In Provence I think we ate a pigeon - It haunted me for about a day. We thought it looked good in French on the menu! I could not have had a better traveling companion than Bill.

Before we went to France, Bill told me that he had AIDS. I was not surprised. After Heath had died, this was my greatest fear come true.

He bore pain and suffering with a strength that I have never witnessed in a person. Bill’s biggest asset (besides his wonderful family) was his positive mind, and his total security within himself.



One of the most incredible dinners I ever experienced was with Irish in LA in late '95. I had a few

days off from a hectic recording schedule, so we decided to pull out all the stops and spare no expense. A few years earlier, he had sent me a list of his fave restaurants in LA, and Patina, a “super hi-fi” French bistro was at the top of the list. When we arrived, we found the table was not the best in the house as it was near the kitchen, quite cramped and a bit noisy. Irish got up and pulled one of the waiters aside, and I don’t know what he said, but we were quickly escorted to one of the best tables in the middle of the room. He somehow became instant best friends with several members of the staff, and we were taken very good care of the entire evening. We decided to order the chef’s special “prix fixe” dinner, which must have been at least 10 courses! When it came time to order, Irish asked the waiter if the “prix fixe” consisted of the same selections for both of us. “Yes” said our waiter. Irish and I looked at him and asked “Would it be possible for the chef to bring us each course with as many different selections as possible? We want to taste anything and everything the chef feels like making!” And that’s exactly how our dinner progressed.

We were there about four hours: we ate snails in herb butter, chipolte crab cakes, stuffed oysters,

a pot-de-creme of whitefish sausages in garlic pepper sauce, 3 or 4 unpronounceable French cheeses, a delicious field green salad with portabella mushrooms in a mustard vinaigrette, yellowtail sashimi with wasabi, a Cornish hen in a wine glazed reduction sauce, and an Ahi tuna steak au poive! We actually had numerous other selections, but it was so overwhelming I can't remember everything we ate. It may sound like a lot, but the servings were actually quite small, so we ate almost everything they served us. We drank an excellent French red, 1982 Lynch-Bage, which was absolutely sublime, and ended the meal with several dessert selections as well as espresso and French cognac. When we left the restaurant we were so stuffed we could barely walk.

During our meal, the conversation drifted from recent work to politics, our families, music, automobiles, food and wine, and we reminisced about friends and our experiences together. It was good to share an indulgent evening like that with Irish, because he is someone who truly appreciated the finer things in life. We celebrated our good luck, and counted our blessings that evening. Our night at Patinas was one of the most memorable evenings I have ever experienced, and I will never forget it!



In 1996 Bill moved back to Madison, where he had endless help from our parents and his friends, especially Jeff and Craig. I remember two special times with music from that time in Madison. The first was when Bill was settled in his apartment and his CD player was finally working after a little repair. Bill put on his favorite Miles Davis CD, “Kind of Blue.” Bill was moved to tears and he said that particular piece had been with him for a long time. He had really missed his music during the move and the getting settled in period. The second was when we had finished dinner and Bill put on Chris Isaac’s CD. Bill sang along and said he loved Chris Isaac’s haunting voice.



I’m a volunteer with Aids Network and was ‘matched’ with Bill. Little did I know how Bill would creep into my heart and soul - and what a

wonderful experience this has been. I began by doing his laundry, cleaning, shopping - mundane activities in themselves, made special by Bill. I kept a journal.

A wild redhead is Bill
Red beard, Blue eyes
Intelligent, tall, very slender
With legs that go on forever.

Loves jazz. Wants to D.J. a program for WORT (Local Madison community radical station. World's Oldest Radio Transmitter). Has made lots of heterosexual friends in his new hometown but no gay friends yet. Loves music. Wants to go to the Cardinal Bar one night for a singles night. Loves to cook. Lived in Long Beach, California with Heath who died six (?) years ago. Had lots of wonderful friends. Had dinner parties with good food and good wine.



For several years I rarely saw Bill. When we were both in Madison we would get together with Pat, Butch, Jeff, and whoever else was around, for

dinner at Antonio's. During one visit Bill told me that there were no two places further apart than Hollywood and Towerville.

It was always possible that we would lose track of each other all together. But then we would be there at a Spooner show or a holiday party and his warmth and welcome manner made me feel that I just couldn't lose touch.

I eventually moved back to Madison and began to see Bill more often. He always seemed to enjoy visiting. We talked on the phone occasionally. He called to give advice about traveling to France. When I returned he said he enjoyed his postcard depicting a very oral gargoyle.

He came here to live and I was surprised again at the closeness I felt. He was someone I had known for so long, yet there was a newness there within the old shape that still strikes me.

I enjoyed him more than ever. Still, this is not the way or the reason to renew old affections.



It's a readjustment, shopping for Bill. He is very particular about brand names form yoghurt to

laundry detergent and orange juice. The store was out of Raspberry Yoplait so I ventured to substitute another made by a local dairy which is also cheaper. (Bill loves the new brand!) The Ensure has to be chocolate and 330 calories, not 250.

Bill is always so appreciative. He is fun to do chores for! Bill is always so upbeat and positive.



Bill likes to talk about Heath. He has responded well but I can tell there's a lot of emotion there.



Bill talked about writing a book about his life. He wanted it finished in time to hand out at his memorial service. Then he smiled and said, "It will be a tell-all book, I'm gonna name names. Wives will be shocked."



Karma is a regal cat. She is the pampered princess and Bill is her lord and master. Bill has mentioned his trip to Paris in glowing terms. Said he went with a wonderful friend. I can imagine him sipping wine outside a cafe on the Boulevard St. Michel. Bill gobbles up life like a gourmet banquet.



We sure missed you at mon and dad's 50th anniversary celebration! I wish that you could have been there. Your mom said that Jeanne dropped off one of the books that we made of "Special Memories" and I do have a few more to be included with that book. I have enclosed these for you.

That was the first time so many of us were together and it truly was a wonderful time. Just in putting together this book for mom and dad so

many other memories came back to me. I don't think I have seen you since I was 17 years old but I sure have a lot of memories stored up of all the time that I spent at Kingston Avenue. Your parents were always so good to me. I remember your home in detail and all the fun times that we had there. I remember the Sunday morning pancake breakfasts on the shore of Lake Michigan, looking through the telescope on clear starry nights and seeing Saturn for the first time with my own eyes, the raspberry bush outside your back door that your mom made such wonderful desserts with, the screened-in porch attached to the garage where we enjoyed many a cook-out (in fact, I think I celebrated my birthday there on more than one occasion), Mr. Whiskers meowing at the crack of dawn wanting to get in for a good sleep, the TV trays set up in the den for lunch every day (we got to watch TV while eating lunch!), your mom sending me to camp with Maureen (they named me "Tall Chief" which I never did understand because I wasn't tall), my first Barbie doll, and always, Bill, I remember you with your seemingly miles of cords upstairs and downstairs and the inventive and imaginative games that you always played. It certainly didn't come as a surprise to me

that your chosen career was one where you got to “play” with all sorts of gadgets.



Bill and I spoke by phone. He said he was “shedding” faster than Karma. I’d teased him weeks ago, about how much cat hair was embedded in his carpet and how difficult it was to remove. Bill will still be gorgeous, with or without his pale red hair. The other day I was watching “Killers from Space” and the image of Peter Graves reminded me of Bill. He was tall and lanky, with something familiar about the cut of his red hair. Only Bill was never abducted by aliens and he didn’t drive to the Power Station in just his robe and pajamas. Not that I know of, anyway.



Bill needs to be taken to a couple of doctor’s appointments. Suddenly my ancient Honda Civic

has shrunk to new mini-dimensions. As Bill coils his magnificent 6 ft. 4 in. frame into the passenger seat. Not a word of complaint, even as we shudder and rattle towards downtown - and never have I noticed the almost total lack of shock absorbers. I feel the need to cushion Bill. Even though he's weak and cold, he remains positive and focused.

Today, there's lots of waiting. Two appointments take 4 hours! Bill warmed to questions about Heath and he talked and cried and talked and smiled as memories were verbalized. Lots of waiting. Lots of conversation. Lots of love was expressed. Intense, deep, passionate, romantic love. Love was a spiritual bond. God! Bill is a beautiful man.

I fixed food for him when we returned to his apartment and he was exhausted.



It's too bad that we lose touch with so many people after we are grown and all going our separate ways but I guess that is a fact of life in this society. I think about your mom and dad being so

close during the summers over at Squirrel Lake but what with working and trying to get things around the house done and have a little fun before work starts again on Monday, the time just flies by.

Bill, I want you to know that my prayers are with you, and your smile that I remember on your face as a young child is in my heart. I hope that things are going well for you. I know that things are difficult for you but from what your mom says, your spirit is great, and this in itself gives other people strength.

I hope that this book of memories has brought some of the good times that we had back to you. I know it has brought a wealth of memories to me and a lot of love and warmth to my life. Oh, for the carefree life of childhood!



A call is made to Bill's apartment. Mr. O'Shaughnessy often answers and a deep male voice answers, 'yes?' I ask if this is the O'Shaughnessy residence and am told, 'Yes - Mr.

O'Shaughnessy speaking,' so, assuming it is Mr. O. Sr. , I say, 'Oh, this is Sara and I hear Bill was discharged and was phoning to see how he is and if I can visit.' The voice tells me (with a chuckle), 'This *is* Bill,' and I'm flabbergasted and laugh at Bill 'stringing me along' - Bill really laughs and is feeling good about feeling good. Bill tells me he is eating hearty meals and would I come over because he'd even try to find some laundry for me to do. I'm almost crying with joy to hear Bill being witty and full of life.



Bill's vast king bed is no more and he fills (and overflows) a hospital bed. Pam the nurse is attending to some bed sores and Mimi and I support him. Bill uses oxygen frequently and the dryness in his mouth means that water and soda are constantly being replenished. Mimi says it's like a circus, with medical equipment coming and going, constant activity, phones to answer, medicine to be given. In the middle of this vortex, there is beautiful Bill, accepting everything with

his grace, showing no agitation or embarrassment at the very intimate things that have to be done for him. So, there's Pam, Mimi and myself - 3 women doing stuff, fluffing pillows, moving trays of medicines, talking, squeezing around each other in the confines of the bedroom and one of the girls asks Bill, "Now, Bill - what do you want? Water? Canada Dry? Pepsi?" With almost a twinkle, Bill raises an index finger and says "All 3!" Bill's dying and he's joking. What a guy! We all roar with laughter.



What I've Learned

One person can certainly influence your life in many ways. While I'm sure I taught Bill a thing or two over the years, he passed along to me many bits of wisdom that still guide me to this day. In many ways, he helped to teach me:

- ☺ How to enjoy music.
- ☺ To stay composed, even when extremely angry.

- ☺ How to wait for your father to have his martini at the end of the day before asking him for money.
- ☺ Self respect.
- ☺ To see the good in people.
- ☺ Friendship.
- ☺ How to be humble.
- ☺ The importance of staying in touch with your friends and family.

I do consider Bill to be a mentor in many ways. And while he taught me many things, none were more important than how to be a good friend. That he was to me. I can only hope I was to him.



I noticed that the big photograph of Heath had been moved to Bill's bedroom, so that Bill could lie in bed and see Heath to his left.



Mimi said being with Bill was a privilege and I know exactly what she means. Bill makes even

these difficult events, these last days special because of his spirit. At one point, Mimi said, when his endurance was at an end, Bill uttered a 'Oh Fuck.' Mimi said 'That's right Bill. Oh Fuck.'



Mimi said she and Jean were alone with Bill and began to talk about departed spirits - family members who had died, Heath also - and how these people were very real because memories were vivid. Mimi was excited that they could touch on the subject of accepting death as a simple transition and that this was a special time of bonding for sisters and brother. She said Bill relaxed back into his pillow and said 'I'm ready!' and a great chill/thrill ran up her spine and she responded with 'you're ready? - Ready for what Bill?' And Bill answered 'To crap.'



Patty called me in San Diego while I was on tour with Garbage and let me know that Irish passed away. Even though I had been on the road for over

a year, I knew about his failing health through telephone calls from home and e-mail from Jeff and Stu. I remember feeling overwhelmed: incredibly sad, numb, pissed off and frustrated...and thinking...it's just not fair! I didn't know quite what to do with myself, but we had a show to play that night, and I had a busy press schedule up until show time, so I immersed myself in work. About a half hour before the show, Shirley cornered me backstage and asked me why I wasn't looking too well. I told her about the bad news and she understood, as I had filled her in on Irish's failing health over the last several months. As the lights went down and a roar went up, we took the stage, and I felt like I needed to dedicate the set to Irish...that I needed to make this show special....that *I needed to play harder and better than I ever had in my life!!!* Now, I don't really know if that happened, but when Shirley surprised me in the middle of the show and dedicated "My Lover's Box" to Irish in front of twenty thousand fans, I was so moved I had to keep my head down the entire song because tears were streaming down my face. I attacked my kit with as much power and tenacity as I could muster, and almost fell off the drum riser at the end of the set. It was as though I was trying to exorcise the demons from

my system, to kill the frustration of feeling helpless, that somehow everything could be the way it was before...that Irish was still alive and well... I called Patty the next day after traveling overnight to San Francisco, and tried to see if it was possible to arrange some flights to make it back to Irish's wake without canceling any shows. It ended up being impossible, and I had to deal with feeling guilty about not being able to be there. I think Irish would have understood, as being a fellow gearhead he knew I had a responsibility to my bandmates and crew. I know Irish had talked to Pat about helping organize his wake...that he would want it to have a touch of class. L'Etoile was a good choice. Pat and I had dined there with Irish several times over the years, and he was also present when we held our wedding reception there. Pat told me that several friends and family members gave very moving testimonials to Irish, and that the wake was beautiful and comforting.

I miss Irish, but even though he's gone, there will be little bits and pieces of him that I will carry with me forever.



I admired Bill's courage and positive attitude as he faced each new medical ailment. Bill was always kind and thankful to all who cared for him and helped him. Thanks to family and friends he was able to die in his own home. Bill is still with us all and I know I'll be with him in Heaven someday.



He gave me his painting of lemons.



We grieve for Irish. I always called him “my gentle giant.” Butch thought so highly of him, and we always appreciated his marvelously warm personality, kindness and consideration. We treasure his memory and are grateful for having shared a part of his life.

The following is the closing of an eulogy by
Maya Angelou:

And when great souls die,
after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always
irregularly. Spaces fill
with a kind of
soothing electric vibration.
Our senses, restored, never
to be the same, whisper to us.
They existed. They existed.
We can be. Be and be
better. For they existed.



Dear Mr. & Mrs. O'Shaughnessy,

Thank you for your contribution of \$95 to
the building of the Monona Terrace Community
and Convention Center. Your inscribed tile will be
installed on the rooftop garden and will be there
for you and others to appreciate for years to come.
Thank you again for helping us to bring the vision

of Frank Lloyd Wright and the spirit of our community together in this long anticipated project.



Brother Knights:

Joyful hope, too, has tempered the loss of our charter member, Brother Knight Bill O'Shaughnessy, who died last month after a long struggle with AIDS. I was truly appreciative of the turnout of council, especially during exam time. His family, also, was most appreciative of how powerfully that spoke, as a tribute both to Bill and to the solidarity shared by our council.



I have only slipped away into the next room.
Whatever we were to each other...that we are
still.

Call me by my old familiar name; speak to me
in the easy way which you always used.

Laugh as we always laughed...at the jokes we
enjoyed together.
Play...Smile...Think of me...Pray for me.
Let my name be the household word that it
always was.
Let it be spoken without effort.
Life means all that it ever meant: it is the same
as it ever was.
There is absolutely unbroken continuity.
Why should I be out of your mind because I
am out of your sight?
I am but waiting for you, for an interval,
somewhere very near...
...just around the corner.
All is well, nothing is past, nothing is lost.
One brief moment and all will be as it was
before...only better.
Infinitely happier and forever we will be to-
gether in Christ.

See you soon Bill.



Mr. and Mrs. O'Shaughnessy,

I'd like to thank you with all my heart. I never imagined that I would ever get a scholarship for my work in the theater. To my surprise and pleasure, I was awarded the William B.

O'Shaughnessy Memorial Theater Scholarship, and it has honored me more than words can express. You have given me a very special dream come true.



In getting to know Bill over the last 23 years, there were three things, I believe, that were important in Bill's life. They were his work, family, and friends.

A few years ago, when Bill and I first talked about his illness, he told me that work was very important to him and he wanted to work as long as he could. He talked frequently about his work so I got an idea of what he did and, knowing Bill, I knew that he did a great job. But I think one of Bill's coworkers summed it up well in a note to me.

He said, "Bill's positive attitude is sorely missed here at work."

“I’m sure he has told you about what he did at VSI. He may not have mentioned the incredible pressure and unreasonable clients we have to deal with in producing live shows and videos for the car companies. Yet, no matter what the situation or problem, we could always rely on Bill to keep his head and lead us to the best possible solution.

“We miss him Big Time!”

Bill often talked about what a good family he came from. Over the last year or so I really came to appreciate what he meant. Just over a year ago, I was fortunate enough to have Bill invite me to go with him for a weekend at his parents home at Squirrel Lake near Minocqua. It was early October and we were looking forward to seeing the fall colors and getting outside in the great north woods. Mother Nature did not want to cooperate. It was cold and damp most of the weekend forcing us to stay indoors. We ended up spending most of the weekend inside visiting and eating, an O’Shaughnessy family tradition. It was a delightful weekend.

Since Bill returned to Madison, I have been able to see their compassion, support, and love for him. Having them here not only helped Bill but helped me as well. When Craig and I went to say good bye to Bill last Sunday I wasn’t sure how I

would be able to do it. But Bill's whole family was there. Craig and I said good bye to Bill. Then we sat, looked at pictures, and talked about Bill. Their love for Bill and joy for life has helped me in my sadness for losing a good friend.

Bill, or "Irish" as many of us liked to call him, had many friends both here in the Midwest and also in California. He worked to maintain those friendships. He did this in large part with his well known organizational skills. Who else would call you to ask what you were going to be doing in three months on such and such a day at 7:00 pm because he was going to be in town and would like to get together for dinner?

Irish loved to entertain his friends. His favorite way was the Weber grill. He was the Weber Master. This summer he came over to our house to grill out. He didn't have a grill at his house so he had to rely on me. I had the Weber grill but none of the skills. I have to say I was very nervous. We all know what a perfectionist Irish was and I knew I couldn't meet his high standards. Fortunately, he knew me well and coached me through the entire grilling process. The food turned out perfect, no thanks to me. Irish, gracious as always, said I had potential.

Bill, I'm sad that you have left us but I'm happy that you are at peace.



Life with the O'Shaughnessy family was pretty great. Even though each of us kids had our personal ups and downs, life at "3024" was closer to an "Ozzie and Harriet" or "Leave it to Beaver" episode than any of my friends experienced.

Bill was the least methodical and most creative of our family of six. What he did, he did well. He enjoyed his personal life, his job, and career accomplishments as much as any individual I know. Unfortunately, AIDS cut that life short.

I loved my brother, my only brother, and my parents and sisters did too. They all deserve medals for the time and emotional support they have put forth in the past twelve months. Bill was never alone when he was not feeling well, like a lot of AIDS patients are, and I'm proud to be able to say that both his family and friends were with him to the end.



It's hard with Billy being gone. It's still a shock to see a photo or video and realize he's not here

anymore, and there will never be another Christmas with all the O'Shaughnessy's. Even though we're grown and have families of our own, we were still very close.

Although Billy is gone, he left us a legacy. In health he was an example of how to: excel at whatever you do, speak your mind, meet challenges with increased resolve, never despair, and be tough, yet value family and friends above all. And in those precious last few weeks, Bill was the model of courage, taking charge of his life until the end, taking the pain, but accepting death when the time came with serenity. I never saw Bill afraid. He showed me how to be strong, if I can only just do it myself.

Thanks little brother for 42 wonderful years, but especially for the last few weeks together. I guess I do remember quite a lot.

To my son Bill,

“Joyful, joyful we adore thee” - from
Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.

These are words from the hymn that Bill selected for the close of his Memorial Mass. He was positive in death, as he had always been while living. His final plans also included a farewell gathering at his favorite French restaurant where good friends and relatives could meet to salute him one more time.

Even as a boy, Bill always had plans and goals, and seemed to make an impact on others. He was creative, focused, generous and an effective communicator with many interests. He built a chemistry lab and then established a “radio station,” WBBO, while at home. He developed the very first television programs which were used in-house at his high school. That was the beginning step in what would become his University major, and then on to a very productive, satisfying and successful career as a video-television producer.

His high school experiences gave him a deep appreciation for education. It led him to will an important part of his estate to funding educational interests. These included an on-going scholarship to be awarded annually to the most outstanding Drama student at his school, William Horlick High in Racine.

Whether intended or not, Bill also brought his already close family even closer together. All members of his immediate family were with him to share in giving him total, tender loving care during the last part of his life. We were blessed with the time and opportunity to share and care.

Thank you, Bill, for being such a fine part of our family.

We love you and miss you.

God bless,
Dad

Contributors include:

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Jeannie Hicks

Bonnie Baird
Stu & Janet Baker
Les Boschke
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