



William Willard Sanders

October 14, 1930 - February 27, 2021

In the early evening of February 27, 2021 the incredible human being William (Bill) Willard Sanders closed his ninety years on earth, at home, with his beloved and loving wife Joyce and eldest daughter Cathy at his side. His loss is felt not only by his family and friends but by the untold number of people throughout those ninety years that had the pleasure of knowing him, working with him, or enjoying his editorial cartoons, his incredible musical talents, his journalism and a life of dreams lived and fulfilled.

Bill was born in Springfield, TN on October 14, 1930. He spent his childhood in the south and first moved to Pompano Beach, Florida as a young teenager. While his life took him many places, his heart forever belonged to Florida.

After receiving a football scholarship to Western Kentucky University in 1951, Bill, who was known as Whitey back then, due to his bleach blonde crewcut, played football for WKU and set an NCAA passing record as a quarter back. The WKU Hilltoppers football team won their first Refrigerator Bowl in 1952 cementing their friendships with Bill and the members of this team remained connected for the rest of their lives. They and their wives called themselves the “brothers and sisters”, meeting together year after year at reunions and ceremonies at WKU.

Bill obviously must have been impressive as a football player for he caught the eye of twin cheerleader, Joyce Wallace, and the two fell in love and

remained so for the following 66 years. They married on February 12, 1955 and their first daughter Cathy was born in October of that year at Fort Benning Georgia.

Although courted by the Cleveland Browns, Bill's football career was cut short by the ROTC draft and the Army sent him to Korea. Bill liked Japan and wanted to share it with Joyce, so upon his discharge he took a department of Army civilian job as a sports writer and cartoonist for the Stars and Stripes newspaper in Tokyo, Japan. Joyce and Cathy joined him and they lived there for two years, and added daughter number two, Vicky to the family. It was this experience at the newspaper and his love of art and drawing that set Bill and Joyce on the course of their life.

They returned from Japan and Bill got a paying job as a political editorial cartoonist for the Greensboro Daily News in North Carolina, where his third and fourth daughters Cheryl, and Denese were born. He fell in love with his family life and his career and there was no stopping him. Political cartooning at that time was a small community and Bill quickly made his opinions known by "slinging ink" as he later honed his skills. His work began to gain recognition and he moved on to the Kansas City Star, and then to the Milwaukee Journal in WI where he and his family would reside for the next 25 years. Bill's accomplishments in Wisconsin were too many to count.

During his time as a political cartoonist and publishing his work up until a month before he passed away, Bill always said "if you like and follow the drawings of a political cartoonist, but don't know what they stood for, that cartoonist is not doing their job."

All who knew him can verify the fact that Bill certainly "did his job". His cartoons were published on the front page of the Milwaukee Journal for nearly 25 years and he was nationally syndicated in over 80 newspapers throughout

the country. He won multiple awards for his work as a cartoonist and an advocate for civil and women's rights. He wrote and published books. He gave talks and interviews at schools, colleges and on television. His passion for music found an amazing outlet when he formed the wonderfully talented Basin Street Saloon Band that played Dixieland Jazz music at venues throughout the midwest and in California. He fulfilled his dream of "making vinyls" by producing 3 albums and multiple cassettes.

During these years in Wisconsin, his family flourished and he continued to follow his dreams.

He designed and built the 16 sided home in Elm Grove where he and Joyce raised their 4 daughters and developed and maintained lifelong friendships especially with four couples and their children, that became known in the family as the "camping group". The camping group families have remained connected throughout his life. The children of these families were like his own and he and Joyce nurtured and maintained this community of friends over time an distance, watching their daughters grow in friendship with the camping group children and continuing to watch and remain connected as those children grew and had children of their own.

And that is the greatest shining light of knowing and loving Bill Sanders was. You knew who he was and what he stood for. He believed in his beautiful wife and his daughters. He lived in a house of women and always stood for the rights of women. He believed in intellectual development, believed that people needed to learn and educate themselves in order to know what to stand for and how to change the world. He taught his children that all people were equal. That all people deserved respect. He believed in democracy and a government that cares for the people in it's society and he believed it was every person's responsibility to speak out against wrong. He believed in art and music as integral and necessary elements of life. His expectations were

that we be the best people we could be. His nature was incredibly generous, and he is well remembered for the depth and longevity of his friendships and the openness of his loving heart.

In 1991 Bill and Joyce retired to Ft. Myers FL. Just as he designed and built his house in Wisconsin, he did so again in Florida, and created a home that was filled with love and family for 30 more years as his daughters married and brought 4 son-in-laws and ultimately eleven wonderful grandchildren to their home in Ft. Myers, where a lifetime of memories were built.

During his time in Florida, Bill continued to freelance his political cartooning, found new Dixie land Jazz musicians to play with and worked with his wife Joyce in developing and seeing come to fruition, the Six Mile Cypress Slough in Ft. Myers FL. He and his beloved Joyce spent their retirement years watching their family grow, traveling and again developed a close community of life time friends in Ft. Myers through their love of golf, music, volunteer work generous loving natures.

Bill Sanders lived a rich, loving, connected and influential life. He touched more people than even he was aware of. The outpouring of love and remembrance of Bill has been amazing and overwhelming. He was an unforgettable Daddy to his four daughters. He was a fun and deeply loving "Dee" to all of his grandchildren, and he was an inspiration to everyone who knew him.

Bill is survived by his wife Joyce Wallace Sanders, his daughters, Cathy (Mark) Johnson (TN), Vicky (Randy) Jungers (CA), Cheryl (Chris) Connell (CT) and Denese (Gus) Sanders-Leonard (CA). He lives in the loving memory of his 11 grandchildren: Justin (Jenny) Johnson, Collin (Faye) Johnson, Nathan (Nancy) Johnson, Brendan (Ashley) Johnson, Kathryn (Justin) Johnson, Shelby Jungers, Haley Jungers, Riley Jungers, Emma (Andrew)

Connell, Emma Strand and Sophia Leonard. He was blessed in his final years with 3 great grandchildren: Moze McGhee, and brand new twins Freya and Jett Johnson.

Go now in peace, may the spirit of love surround you, all the way home.

There will be a two memorials to celebrate the life of this wonderful man.

March 9, 2021 at 1:00pm at the Gendron Funeral Home (2325 East Mall Drive Ft. Myers FL)

July 8, 2021 at 1:00pm at the Trinity United Methodist Church (2303 Jones Blvd. Murfreesboro, TN)

Previous Events

Funeral Service

MAR 9. 1:00 PM (ET)

Gendron Funeral & Cremation Services Inc. - Fort Myers, FL

2325 E Mall Dr

Fort Myers, FL 33901

(239) 274-0088

mike.gendronfuneralhome@msn.com

<https://www.gendronfuneralhome.com/contact-us/fort-myers-chapel>

Tribute Wall



“ *William Willard Sanders*

October 09, 2023 at 02:01 AM



“ *William Willard Sanders*

January 28, 2023 at 12:09 PM



“ <https://www.news-press.com/story/opinion/contributors/2016/06/03/sanders-honor-non-service-veteran/85237210/>

Here is the wonderful reflection of Bill at the MeyerKord Hotel with my friend Jim Johnson the guitarist and Maggie, aka Martha Raye

MN Mike Chase - February 13, 2022 at 10:33 AM



“ *59 files added to the album Life Tributes*



Gendron Funeral & Cremation Services Inc. - March 08, 2021 at 12:24 PM

SL

“ *The Sanders family was an important part of the Unitarian West "family" when our family attended. I loved Bill's sense of humor, his witty answers to questions, his remembering us when he saw us years later at the golf course in Pewaukee; and, of course, his wonderful talent as a cartoonist. Joyce was a special friend when our church split, and we worked together for a time. The Sanders girls were, and still are, friends with my daughter, and the name Sanders means something to our past history. I send my love and caring thoughts to Joyce and the girls and their families; we are at that time of life when we have lived our best years, and know that each day is sacred. Love and caring to you. May your happy memories soon take over the difficult recent days, and may you enjoy sharing your memories together. Sincerely, Shirley Loebel*

Shirley Loebel - March 05, 2021 at 09:54 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of William Willard Sanders.*



March 03, 2021 at 03:11 PM



“ *Full Heart was purchased for the family of William Willard Sanders.*



March 03, 2021 at 10:55 AM