

# In celebration of the life of Bill Bonwell

Messages from Friends and Family, September 2009  
www.bonwell.org

Life Celebration - Wichita Art Museum, Beren Room, September 19 from 6-8p.m.

Contributions in Bill's memory - World of Wings Pigeon Center Museum Building Fund, 2300 N.E. 63rd, Oklahoma City, OK 73111 or Wichita Public Library Foundation, 223 S. Main, Wichita, KS 67202.  
Contact: amy@bonwell.org or Gloria Bonwell 1828 W 18th St N, #1006, Wichita, Ks, 67203.

Cecil Curtis has been a friend of Bill's since as a teen he spent time with Bill learning to raise and race homing pigeons. He and his wife Arnetia shared their creative talents of poetry and painting in honor of Bill's Life Celebration.



## The Flight Home

The Master handler bred and raised me for The Flight Home.

The mystery (the exact flight a pigeon flies from point of release to home)  
has been revealed to me.

I've been released from the basket of life to freely fly home.

I circle and beehive and know that the Master handler  
bred and raised me for The Flight Home.

I know the way; it feels so good to fly and stretch my wings in  
The Flight Home; a place where all my needs are met.

I'll not be tired, thirsty, or hungry anymore when  
the Master handler welcomes me home, home for eternity.

Arnetia Curtis



14 Sept 2009

I practiced law with Bill for 16 years. He has been a big part of my life for 21 years. I have lots of memories about him and lots of lessons learned from him, but, in thinking the past week about him I keep remembering one specific evening in my life: It was February of 2008 and I was in a darkened theater in Chicago along with other women attorneys with whom I was attending a Continuing Legal Education seminar. We decided to attend the Broadway performance of "Wicked." I had read the book and was interested to see the performance. In the Second Act, near the very end of the play, there is a song performed by Elphaba, the wicked witch, and Glinda, the good witch, entitled "For Good." They sang it as a duet to each other.

Here is what Glinda sang to her friend Elphaba: "I've heard it said that people come into our lives for a reason, bringing something we must learn. And we are led to those who help us most to grow - if we let them. And, we help them in return. Well, I don't know if I believe that's true, but, I know I'm who I am today because I knew you. Like a comet pulled from orbit as it passes a sun. Like a stream that meets a boulder halfway through the wood. Who can say if I've been changed for the better? But, because I knew you - I have been changed for good."

Elphaba replies: "It well may be that we will never meet again in this lifetime. So, let me say before we part, so much of me is made of what I learned from you. You'll be with me like a handprint on my heart. And now, whatever way our stories end, I know you have re-written mine by being my friend. Like a ship blown from its mooring by a wind off the sea. Like a seed dropped by a sky bird in a distant wood. Who can say if I've been changed for the better? But because I knew you, because I knew you, I have been changed for good."

I heard that song in Chicago - thought of my friend, Bill – and cried in the dark because we all knew he did not have long to be with us. But, he lasted another precious 19 months.

Because I knew my friend, Bill, I have been changed for good.

Susan Ellis



16 September 2009

There is a tiny snapshot that keeps turning up in Betty Rowley's huge and haphazard collection of photos. The subject is an adolescent Bill Bonwell. The composition of elements on the curious little artifact puts him squarely in the center. And there he sits holding a pigeon. And both he and the bird are expressionless. The buttons on his shirt are all buttoned up—including the top one. What we see here is a portrait of a boy who appears to be on his way to a "buttoned-up" life.

But what about the bird? Raising and racing pigeons is not exactly mainstream. Then or now. In fact, the only other pigeon person I have ever personally known besides Bill is the schoolteacher member of my church who got him into the pigeon game in the first place. The truth of the matter is that the heart of a Bohemian was even then beating beneath young Bill's buttoned-up shirt. And it went on to help him forge a great career as a lawyer, find a bright and talented wife far away from the hometown bridal pool, raise a family of four creative kids with minds and careers of their own, establish a national pigeon museum, travel the world over, and over again—and to become a special friend and mentor and soul brother to a countless parade of needful human beings like me.

And as for that little photograph of Bill and his pigeon, I plan to place it in a secure place of honor where it will serve as an icon and a special place to go to remember with love, a very special friend.

Patric Rowley



9 September 2009  
My Memories of Bill Bonwell  
By Jerry Black

It was 1995 or 1996 when I applied to the AU's Help-A-Beginner program. I had been racing for a little over a year and was quite frustrated with my results. I had read that the HAB program would assign someone with experience, outside my club, who could shine some light on my shortcomings and help me get to the next level of competitiveness in the sport.

I was assigned this old guy from Wichita, KS named Bill Bonwell. He lived only a couple of hundred miles away, a bonus for me since I travelled to Wichita regularly for business. and flew in a rather active club with about 12 members. All the guys in the club had heard of Bill Bonwell, but few had ever met him. "He should help you some" said the older guys from the club. I was secretly hoping that they were terrified that Bill would give me the edge that would help me start kicking their butts.

I called Bill and we discussed the birds. I told him I'd be down the next week for business and asked if he and Gloria would like to go to dinner. He was happy to set up a date and the next week, I met Mr. Bill Bonwell.

We had a beer (or a martini) and led me out to the loft to talk pigeons. He started talking a language I call Bonwellese but I am sure that if you fly pigeons, you know the lingo... "This is a great blue check hen – 2454 – she's out of 1512 you know – my Wetzels foundation cock mated to 101. She's a daughter of the "Green eyed hen" mated to a son of the Adjutant (or something like that). She's won 15 races and came in second only twice. You know, she's an AU Champion twice now? If she's lucky, she'll win the AU Champion award again this year! I'm shipping her to the 500 miler and she's going to win it. Did I tell you that she's a daughter of 101! Here, hold her! She is a 2 time AU Champ!" he said with a smile... This red check is from Russ Burn's loft. He won the CJC Futurity by an hour (my mind was becoming fuzzy with all the band numbers he was rattling off) was the only day bird in a tough 350 miler – won by 2 hours and 30 minutes! That bird beat J. D. Botkin by an hour. This bird beat Cecil Curtis by 2 minutes, 33 and a half seconds! This hen beat 'ole Wayne Russell by half a second! And on and on and on! I could tell he loved his birds!

We talked for another hour or so. He let me handle 101 and 2454. I felt 1512, and about 20 or so AU champions, heck, this guy had nothing but champions in his loft!

I kept thinking that there is no way that anyone can call the winner of a 500 mile race!

He shook his can filled with rocks and the birds out flying I lived in a Southern suburb of Kansas City came crashing in through the bobs to eat. I had never seen anything like it before. He fed the birds and you could tell that they actually liked him! After they ate what he put down, he grabbed a handful of peanuts and walked into the section and he fed each bird, by hand, a single peanut for desert! Amazing! His birds didn't just tolerate him like mine did, but they actually loved him!

As we were driving to dinner that evening I chuckled to myself thinking this old bastard has nerve! There is no way he can predict winning a 500 mile race like he did... 2454 to win the 500 mile race! Preposterous, no way!

At dinner, Gloria sat with us and listened to Bill's ravings about pigeons and a place he called the World of Wings. We had a delightful evening. And, every time I visited Wichita – at least once a month – we got together, visited his loft for more Bonwellese and went to dinner. It was never boring to me, but Gloria did roll her eyes once in a while... She asked me an interesting question, "just who feeds the birds when I leave town?". I told her my wife always did, but she might complain about it once or twice a day... she just smiled, knowing they shared a common bond...

That next Sunday evening, I called Bill and asked how the race went. Believe it or not, he had won the 500 mile race! With 2454 in first place as predicted! I began to think that this old guy kind of knew what he was talking about!

I had a much better season racing birds that year and continued to improve. Bill was responsible for my advancement and all the guys at the club noticed! I won several club awards in the coming years and even took a combine average speed award! I could have never done it without Bill's constant help.

I especially like meeting Bill for lunch at Mike's Steak House for the Wichita Pigeon Club's weekly lunch. I met all the regulars. J.D., Wayne, Cecil, and on, and on... They were great guys – every one of them.

Several years later in 2002, I changed jobs and moved to Joplin, MO. It was that year that Bill asked me to become a member of the Board of Directors at the World of Wings. I have served on the board since then and we are finally getting close to making his dream of building a bigger and better museum a reality. My new job never allowed me to visit Wichita and our visits pretty much ceased.

I became a mentor to the AU's Help A Beginner program. My first beginners – a husband/wife team (Gail and David Lay from Chicago) were great students. They sent their results in to the AU for the HAB competition that fall and actually were named the best Beginners in the country that year! WOW! Bill was proud.

Bill was quite a leader. He was an exceptional mentor. He was a fine friend.

He was passionate and motivated to advance his favorite sport and hobby. His vision will last for generations. His legacy for pigeon racing will be memorialized because of his vision in establishing the World of Wings Museum.

I have a beginner this year (not assigned by the AU, but one that Bill referred me to last year). I have already talked to him this morning and he was excited that his birds were coming in from a 75 mile club training toss! I am going to share the "secrets" with him as Bill did for me. He's on his way to a good young bird season this year... I think Bill would have been proud.



17 September 2009

Once in awhile along life's journey, we encounter a few special people who have a significant impact on our lives. These are people who have the kind of character we most admire. Bill Bonwell was someone who positively impacted all of us in this room at some point in our lives. Bill was someone with the kind

of character that many of us wish to emulate.

Bill Bonwell loved his wife, loved his kids, loved the law, he loved his birds and he loved his dog, Nona. You can tell a lot about a person by getting to know their children, because the "apple doesn't fall far from the tree". Bill and Gloria have four outstanding children and I have heard Bill remark more than once, he didn't know how Gloria did it years ago with four little ones so close in age. You can also tell much about someone by watching them interact with an animal. Nona, the border collie, and Bill were joined at the hip and had a "mutual admiration society" going with each other.

I first met Bill when I was a young lawyer new to Wichita. After my first Ethics committee meeting, where Bill was the revered chairman for over 30 years, he asked me at the end of the meeting in front of the committee, if I would stay, as he would like to have a few words with me. I immediately panicked and figured that I was going to be "dismissed from the committee" because I was female or too young to know much about ethics. Bill approached me and said "I believe we are cousins by marriage" and proceeded to tell me how we were related. Bill and I continued our friendship through our professional careers, but really became good friends in the last 4 years after my mother died. Bill was ethical and principled when it came to practicing law and representing clients. In fact, he gave such "outstanding" representation to one of his notorious military clients, that Bill's client lost his argument on appeal that he had "ineffective assistance of counsel", but the judges set aside the other two co-defendants verdict because they didn't get the Bill Bonwell defense.

Bill cared about people much more than he cared about money. I referred friends to Bill because I knew he was trustworthy and honest. When Bill probated my mother's estate, and when I received his bill, I told him to "double it" and he refused. Bill told me he could have made a lot more money in his practice by charging more, but that he always wanted to feel good about waking up in the morning and looking in the mirror. We finally did negotiate additional remuneration in the form of steak dinners and martinis!

Bill was an optimist who loved life. He lived life to the fullest and had hobbies and passions. Many of you know about his "passion for pigeons" and his labor of love in founding the World of Wings Pigeon Center in Oklahoma. Little did Gloria know what was in store when she met Bill in Germany and learned that "he liked birds", thinking what a compassionate quality in a wonderful man.

There are many stories about his pigeon racing and his experiences selling his pigeons to Japanese and Taiwanese who loved Bill's pigeons. One of Bill's birds was so famous in Asia; he won over \$1 million—resulting in Bill Bonwell making the front cover of the Taiwanese Pigeon Magazine. The next year the individual purchased more of Bill's birds and a year with these birds, he wrote a note that said "Wrong Bird".

Upon Bill's retirement, the Bonwell's prepared to move from a home they had lived in for over 40 years. Bill was reluctant to move and give up his birds, until Gloria gave him the ultimatum that it was the birds or her. Gloria later said she wasn't sure whether it was going to be her or the birds.

Gloria was the love of Bill's life. Bill recently told my brother Brock, who is the Bonwell "handy man", that he knew how much Gloria adored him. Bill and Gloria had fun together. They enjoyed one another's company and they loved to travel. They were ambassadors for world peace through the Friendship Force because they were open minded and enjoyed learning about other people and other cultures. Bill's spiritual philosophy on life was to live by the Golden Rule: Treat others the way you want to be treated.

Bill was a great story teller. He had wonderful stories about his youth (including the story about how he lost his finger the last day of school), his days in college when he played sports (while the true athletes were still in the War), his law school days, his military service and some of his interesting legal cases. He was a Sedgwick County "pro tem" judge for a number of years, stepping in when a judge was absent or unable to hear a case.

Bill had a great sense of humor. He had a kind of self-deprecating humor that made everyone feel welcome. He could see the humor in even the "sorriest" of circumstances. Bill and I talked openly about death and his impending death. We had two "good-bye celebrations" for Bill the past two summers. He loved the idea of getting together with his family and friends to celebrate his life while he was still with us. This summer he said "if I make it to the 5 year celebration – I hope I receive a "gold watch".

Bill lived a full life; he lived well; he loved life; he loved Gloria and all of his children; he loved his friends. We will miss Bill, but how fortunate we are for having known him. How fortunate that during our life's journey, we were touched by Bill Bonwell.

"Our Hearts Give Immortality To Those We Love In Memory" and we will always hold Bill Bonwell in our fondest of memories.

Shannon Krysl



15 September 2009

MR. BONWELL (YES, I STILL CALL HIM THAT EVEN THO I HAVE KNOWN HIM FOR OVER 33 YEARS) HIRED ME AS A RECEPTIONIST FOR HIS LAW FIRM IN 1976 WHEN I WAS ONLY 17 YEARS OLD. I HAD GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL IN JANUARY, I TOOK A LEGAL SECRETARY COURSE FROM JANUARY TO JUNE AND STARTING GOING ON INTERVIEWS. IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, THE INTERVIEW WITH MR. B WAS ONLY MY THIRD ONE! HE ASKED ME ALL KINDS OF "NO-NO" QUESTIONS, SUCH AS WAS I MARRIED, HOW MANY CHILDREN DID I PLAN ON HAVING, AND WERE CHILDREN IN MY IMMEDIATE FUTURE!!! HE THOUGHT I WAS TOO YOUNG, SO HE DECIDED NOT TO HIRE ME. BUT - THEN - I SENT HIM A THANK YOU NOTE FOR THE INTERVIEW. NEEDLESS TO SAY, I GOT THE JOB AND WORKED FULL-TIME FOR HIM FOR 24 YEARS AND PART TIME FOR HIM UNTIL HE RETIRED. WHAT WONDERFUL, FUN-FILLED YEARS.

WE CELEBRATED SO MANY THINGS THROUGH THE YEARS. WE CELEBRATED HIS 50TH BIRTHDAY IN 1977; HE HELPED ME CELEBRATE MY 50TH SURPRISE BIRTHDAY LAST YEAR. WE CELEBRATED THE WONDERFUL ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF HIS 4 CHILDREN, THEIR MARRIAGES AND THE BIRTHS OF HIS BELOVED GRANDCHILDREN. HE HELPED ME CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF MY FIRST CHILD, MICHELE, IN 1980. HE BRAVED A SNOW STORM IN JANUARY, RACED TO THE HOSPITAL WITH HIS COAT TAILS FLAPPING, LUGGING HIS HUGE VIDEO CAMERA, YOU KNOW, ONE OF THOSE EARLY ONES THAT YOU HAD TO CARRY ON YOUR SHOULDER, AND TAPED MICHELE, SCOT AND ME, ALL THE FLOWERS AND GIFTS AND VISITORS TO THE HOSPITAL. HE ALSO TAPED MY OFFICE SO MICHELE COULD SEE WHERE HER MOMMA WORKED. MICHELE WATCHED HER "BABY TAPE" OVER AND OVER AND OVER UNTIL IT ALMOST WORE OUT!! HE HELPED US CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF OUR SON, COLE, 9 YEARS LATER - ALSO IN A SNOW STORM IN FEBRUARY, BUT THIS TIME WITH A MUCH SMALLER CAMERA - ONE THAT WOULD FIT IN YOUR PALM. AND HE JUST HELPED US CELEBRATE THE BIRTH OF OUR FIRST GRANDCHILD, BELLA

WE ALL KNOW MR. B WAS A "TECHIE." HE LOVED ALL THE NEW COMPUTERS AND PRINTERS AND VIDEO EQUIPMENT. WE ALWAYS HAD THE BEST EQUIPMENT AT WORK. WHEN I FIRST STARTED, ALL THE SECRETARIES HAD CORRECTING SELECTRIC TYPEWRITERS. I HAD ONLY SEEN ONE BEFORE, AND HAD NEVER USED ONE. I WAS IN SEVENTH HEAVEN - A TYPEWRITER THAT WOULD CORRECT YOUR MISTAKES!!! IT SEEMED WE WERE ALWAYS AHEAD OF EVERYONE ELSE IN TOWN. OUR FIRST COMPUTER WAS A PORTABLE COMPAQ. IT HAD A WHOLE 20 mg OF MEMORY, WHICH WE JUST KNEW WE WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO FILL UP. WE PUT IT IN THE LIBRARY AND MR. B AND I WOULD FIGHT OVER WHO COULD USE IT NEXT.

WE HAD SO MUCH FUN AT WORK - WE PRACTICED LAW, WE RACED PIGEONS, WE BOUGHT FARM LAND IN CHAUTAQUA COUNTY, WE BOUGHT CATTLE, WE DUG OIL WELLS, WE SOLD OIL FROM THE WELLS - WE DID IT ALL AND I LEARNED SO, SO MUCH FROM HIM. HE WAS A KIND AND PATIENT TEACHER - I CAN ONLY REMEMBER ONE TIME IN ALL THE YEARS I KNEW HIM THAT HE GOT UPSET WITH ME.

SO TODAY, I DON'T SAY GOODBYE - I SAY FAREWELL, SEE YOU SOON, UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN.

WITH ALL OUR LOVE,

SANDI, SCOT, MICHELE, COLE AND BELLA SMITH



10 September 2009

Life Celebration for Bill Bonwell.

Dear Gloria and family,

We are very disappointed that we won't be able to make the trip from Virginia for Bill's Life Celebration on September 19.

As I look back over my 75 year friendship with Bill (including sharing the same classrooms from the second grade through high school and on to Wichita University), I can recall many enjoyable and unique experiences shared with Bill. One such occasion that stands out in my mind occurred in our senior year at East High. Bill, my brother Ron and I were working on Saturdays for the Martin Eby Construction Company. I provided the transportation in my beautiful '31 Model A convertible. She was a yellow and green topless beauty that cost me \$95.00; her name, Belchin' Beulah, was painted on the driver's door. To provide cover, I found 1/2 of a Beechcraft engine cowling that worked well. There was one major shortcoming however; no side windows, no lateral vision; none!

We had an uneventful drive down Central until we reached a major intersection. Suddenly there was large crushing jolt on the left side of my car; we had collided with a Wichita city bus!

We all panicked and ran from the accident. After running about two blocks along Central, Bill and Ron, the two future lawyers, felt that we should return to the scene of the crime. Fortunately the city bus and my car were not seriously damaged but clearly we were at fault. The story did have a happy ending; my dad's law firm represented the bus company.

In spite of severe health problems during the last several years, Bill was remarkable in his enthusiasm, spirit, and outlook for the future. Just two months ago I received from him several photos from our days at Alcott. My favorite was the post office mockup in the sixth grade where Bill and I were busy selling stamps to the girls in the class. After I thanked him and told him how much I enjoyed those memories he sent additional pictures from high school. This was typical of Bill, sharing wonderful remembrances with friends.

With love,

Vince and Iveagh



16 September 2009

Hello, Amy,

Just a few memories from Stretch Cather.....

My memory of Bill at WU was as a master politician. During school elections he was always the one who decided who should run for what office and which coalition Men of Webster should join. I was always surprised he didn't make politics his full time profession. To help his long-time friend, Bob Simpson, make the decision between Men of Webster and Phi Sigs, he enlisted my help (Bob and I had become friends on the basketball court) and asked me to sit with Bob on the athletic bus from Wichita to K-State and back. We all have wonderful memories of Men of Webster.

For 20+ years we didn't see much of one another until, coincidentally, our two sons were members of the DU Chapter at Kansas State. How ironic that Men of Webster had by then associated with the National DU's. We laughed about how for a small sum, we could also become "bastard DU's"....as Bill so eloquently put it! I discovered then Bill's interest in cattle and land, and we could talk farming. I admired his ability to--from a book---learn about almost anything his curiosity and interests led him to. I once heard Gloria say, "Bill could take a book....and learn how to do most anything."



16 September 2009

Gloria, Lisa, Bill, Amy, Brent,

The whole Bolle-family (Belgium) feels sad about the passing of Bill. We remember the great times we had in the 80's-90's when Bill and Gloria came over to Belgium or we came over to the USA. Hours and hours Bill could talk about and watch my fathers pigeons. Bill was a really great person: simple with a heart of gold (we here say)...

The last year before my wife (Els) and I had our first daughter (Liesbeth, born on "the" September 11th, 2001), that was in 2000, we had a great trip to the USA. There's one thing we never will forget..

In Colorado Springs I had so much pain on my back-bone that I could not stand up so we had to re-arrange the flight-tickets. Bill called the flight-company, and spoke maybe 20 minutes with "somebody" on the other side of the line. Just before everything was finalised, the line broke. Bill dialed again the same number: "Can I speak to the same person as I just did before?". Somebody else on the other side of the line said "I don't know all my colleagues, you're calling a virtual call-center with hundreds of employers all over the world." Bill had to re-explain everything, but he did and our flight-tickets became re-arranged...

Thank you Bill for this, and for all the great times you gave me and my family!

Our condolences to all of you...

Marnick and the Bolle-family (Belgium)



17 September 2009

Dear Amy,

My deepest sympathy on he death of your father. He was a year younger than I and it doesn't seem fair to die so young.

I didn't actually see him very often on trips from Mesa where I was born. On trips to Kansas in 1932, 1938, 1947 we saw each other briefly. also our family reunion a few years ago, but I knew him best through our "cuzzins" e-mails where I got to know him better.

With regrets,

Barbara Hardin Harwood



14 September 2009

My favorite memory of Mr. Bonwell was when Amy and I were in Kindergarten. Our entire kindergarten classroom got to visit your home for a field trip and see the pigeons and also ride the horse around the stable a couple of times. Mr. Bonwell was so kind and patient and allowed each person their special turn. Later in life when I would return for a visit with Amy- once again I saw this kind, gentle man who always made time to visit. He would listen to a silly story from Amy and me and always tell us to be careful while we headed out the door. Please accept my condolences for your loss. I hope your memories bring you comfort and peace. With love...  
Jana Epperly, Wichita, Kansas

7 September 2009



Aunt Gloria, Lisa, Bill, Amy, Brent and families: I am sorry to hear about the passing of Uncle Bill. You are in our thoughts and prayers. I called mom this morning to let her know and she will be in touch soon. Our deepest Sympathy to you.

~ Karen M Holston, Crowley, Louisiana



8 September 2009

After reading about Bill's peaceful departure, I could only think and imagine. Thinking of wondrous days living and learning in Kansas in summer @ 1960.

Bill and brother Whitney took the time to teach a kid photography ... I learned.



Imagining what to do with Bill's new energy; grabbed a camera and got to work. Moon glow cast an almost aromatic radiance and flickered through the pecan trees.

The moon makes a heart with four fingers enclosed ....

Lisa, Bill III, Amy & Brent.

Bill Bonwell and Gloria Nell Girouard are the big hearts that together gave them life.

Tina Girouard



9 September 2009

Dear Ms. Bonwell,

Please accept my wife's and I deepest condolences on the passing of your father.

Your father and I never met in person but we did serve together for a time on the board of directors at the World of Wings. We had many meaningful conversations about the WOW and its continued future and I grew to respect his vision for the future of the museum.

When I served on the board I made the motion to name the Museums future great Hall after your father. President Jim Gabler agreed with the idea and to the best of my knowledge the motion still stands as such. I believe that the hobby owes him this much and that that this is a meaningful demonstration of the hobbies respect to his continued memory. I have a great respect for your father and his vision for building a museum worthy of the pigeon hobby. Recently I have asked my many pigeon friends to support the World of Wings Pigeon Building Fund in your father's name in the hope that each fancier will make a meaningful contribution in support of this great cause.

Respectfully yours,

Drew Lesofski



15 September 2009

CONCERNING BILL BONWELL:

I am saddened by the news of Bill's death--we go back to 1937 and Alcott Grade School where he was one of a group of slightly older boys who became pacesetters for me in my life. The group included Bob Simpson, Vince and Ron Gott, Kenny Hedrick, Sonny Sumpter, Wilson Cadman and George Davis and a very few others. If you didn't know Bill you might not realize the importance of racing pigeons to our society. In 1962 my business partners and I persuaded Bill to loan us a few of these valuable birds for props in an advertising photograph to be shot in a Cessna hanger. We may have persuaded Bill that the continued presence of our pigmy legal account in his firm could no longer be assured without his input (the pigeons). Shaking his head and grumbling Bill brought them out to the hanger and even secured their flight feathers with paraffin so they could just wander around in the set but not get away.

Suddenly they somehow broke free and flew due East out of this cavernous building! The sight of the dozen or so yelling, pleading people that resulted is unforgettable. Art directors, photographers, models, and technicians, together with their attorney-- Bill--lined up in the huge door opening and watched them fly about a mile or so away and then make a big turn so they were heading at high speed back to the hanger. They appeared to be doomed to smash themselves into the facing wall right over our heads above the door! Come on boy! Up! Up! You can do it!, we yelled. They did, though barely.

Bill's account of the last, battered bird literally walking home was also memorable. You talk about the majesty of the law.

Ted Young  
Minneapolis



16 September 2009

Hi Amy,

My Deepest Sympathies to you and your family. Bill was a friend of my father, Dennis Peterson, from Odebolt, Iowa. For many years he handled birds for him, and later for me, for the Kansas Prairie Classic Futurity. At one time, I had a major problem losing pigeons to a mink and Bill generously gave me some birds to help me restock. He will be missed.

Noonie Jones



6 September 2009

Brent, Amy, Bill and Gloria:

My condolences to all of you on the passing of your dad and husband. What an interesting life he led...it sounds like he lived it to the fullest. My prayers go out to you.

~ Beth Greenshields Courrau, Monument, Colorado



15 September 2009

Gloria and Amy,

It is such sad news to hear of Bill's passing. I have known and admired Bill since the early 1970's, when I was first elected as a Director on the AU Board. I believe that Bill had just been elected President. Being new and somewhat lost at the time, Bill and his friend J.D. Bodkin asked me to join them for dinner that first night. A very welcomed invitation, and educational. They were both so knowledgeable in the sport and the politics of the AU. They got me off to a great start and I have been forever grateful.

From that time on, we have been friends, and worked together towards the Museum project, from the time Bill obtained the E. Lang Miller library material, and all of the funding of the project. I have never met a more dedicated and hard working person in the pigeon sport and have had the greatest admiration for him for all these years. He has dedicated so much of his life and time unselfishly for the betterment of the sport, and of course as the old saying goes, "no good deed goes unpunished"! It is a shame that some opposed him, for their own goals and recognition, that was never part of Bill's agenda. He spent many years as the Legal Advisor to the AU, at a token expense compared to the service given. He was a giant among mortals and did so without taking credit for himself. He will be missed and remembered by those of us that had the honor and privilege to know and work with him.

Laurie McConnell



14 September 2009

Hey Amy! What do I say? My dad goes to lunch every Wednesday with the pigeon guys and the first thing I ask is if Mr. B was there. The times that he came to see me at BestBuy for the newest and greatest. He always talked so good about you. I will miss him as will my daddy. If you need anything from any of us, just let me know. Send your mom all of our best wishes. God Bless you. Please stay in touch. I really would enjoy that. Sincerely, J.D. & Suzanne Botkin



14 September 2009

Bill Bonwell surely will be missed but never forgotten.

My name is Steve Horvath, and I feel very fortunate to have met Bill. I am from Sekesfehervar, Hungary, and when I lived there I belonged to a Pigeon Club Called D5. This was too many years ago. Here in Wichita, I met Bill at a Pigeon show at the Coliseum I was interested to know more about what and how he did with Pigeons here in the United States. so we exchanged phone numbers and short after that I visited him at his home. I was very impressed with his knowledge about Pigeons, the breeding, the training, the care and the wonderful set up that he had in his home with pigeons My wife and I visited Bill and his wife Gloria several times. We always enjoyed the conversations, it was never a dull moment while in his company. he and his wife visited my home couple of times too, I only regret that we did not do it more often. Nevertheless, the time that we shared is going to be treasured memory.



13 September 2009

Hi Amy-

Well, this is hard to do---Our memory of Bill includes Gloria too!

We do family dinners on many special occasions, holidays, or just because we want too!

So, almost always we invite Bill & Gloria to join us, which means,

Susan, Alan, Ted, Sandy, Monroe, Maria, Megan, Alex & Morgan...

We lost our parents several years ago, so Bill & Glo fill a very huge void for us... We enjoy sharing with them, Gloria always wants to bring something even though we tell her just to bring an appetite and Bill,

but, she always brings something anyway- I usually add lottery tickets as part of the table decorations at the plate of each person, Bill seemed to enjoy that quite a bit... especially when he would WIN, general someone would WIN, and we would give it Bill to cash in... A job he didn't object to.

So we will miss that at our upcoming dinners... Just know we loved and cared for Bill and Gloria as part of our extended family. BILL will be missed.

Sandy Williams



13 September 2009

Amy: Just a brief word from me (Ted). As all of you know Bill had a really good handle on the world of the Computer (as every one can tell you much better than mine). More than once over the dinner table I would spout some innocent half or even less than half truth. \*\*Your Dad would by the next

morning ferrite out the real truth from his computer and in his subtle manner \*\*get the word out to the dinner \*\*guests from the night before (usually Susan). I believe he knew that the facts would find its way back to me. A couple of points I am making here. Firstly, I believe \*\*that the subtle manner that Bill would make his point was very much how he dealt \*\*with life be it the practice of law or just dealing with other of life's issues; not loud, but \*\*very effectively. Secondly, Bill did not \*\*fear were the world was going. His understanding of the workings of that gadget we call a Computer showed his desire to be part of today and \*\*not just live in the past.\*\*

\*Just one other thing. We had on several occasions talked about Bill, Alan and I \*\*make a day trip to "The Farm". I believe Bill would have liked that. I'm sorry to say it never happened.\*

Ted Williams



11 September 2009

Bill Bonwell was a fine lawyer but, most importantly, a good and decent man. I was fortunate to practice with Bill as his partner from 1984 through 1990.

Bill was the first "business casual" lawyer I knew. He hated wearing a coat and tie, but always had his trusty houndstooth sport coat and 4 or 5 ties on his coat rack for when he was required to appear in court.

Bill was always ready to teach anyone that asked about pigeons. All of us who knew him spent some time in his "chicken coop" when we visited Bill and Gloria at home.

I still remember, in my first month of practice with Bill, asking Sandy (our secretary) what in the world was the noise I kept hearing. Her response was that the noise was some of Bill's pigeons that he was either shipping or receiving. Bill always took interest in those that practiced law or worked with him. He often tried to discuss my area of practice which involved public utilities. However, I always suspected that pigeons were probably a much more interesting topic to Bill than my law practice.

Bill possessed a great sense of humor that was evidenced upon his return from the Wichita Bar Association Ethics Committee (which he chaired) over the years to report to each lawyer in the office, "Well, we're clean for another month!".

Bill will be missed, but always remembered by those of us whose lives were touched by Bill in so many and varied ways.

Warmest personal regards,

Curtis M. Irby



9 September 2009

Amy, I am glad to add my bit to the tributes to your father. Bill was undoubtedly a very good attorney. But in my mind, he merits even higher praise for being a fine human being. He seemed to recognize that all of us were "doing the best we could"; consequently he respected us. Actually Gloria also did that. When my husband, Bob, died nearly three years ago Bill took pictures of the gathering for his

memorial service, and he made copies for each of our children--so my children and I have reason to think of Bill every time we remember that service.

Several of us who met at Kansas Newman College nearly forty years ago have since met periodically to share our friendship. I will always treasure the support Bill gave me to trust myself. We will miss him.

Jean Marchand



7 September 2009  
Our Founder

Hello everyone,

Last year when I suggested to the Board to name the street leading in from 63rd St. after Bill, I thought that would be a start in paying tribute to our Founder. Having served with Bill on one of the original Boards some 30 years ago I know how much this man has put into the AHPI and what it meant to him. I feel terrible that we weren't able to put the shovel in the ground and at least get the shell up in his lifetime. He is one of the reasons I accepted to chair the Building Committee. I just called him last week for some advice and he sounded great and enthusiastic. I really thought we were going to make it! I do want to be sure we hang his picture in a prominent place in the new building. I'm sure he will be watching over us. May he rest in peace. The best way I know of to honor Bill Bonwell is to put our hearts and souls into the new Museum and Library, as he would have wanted.  
Tom Nettis



23 September 2009

When I was a youngster and went to Wichita, Kansas, to visit my grandparents, I would often hear the name of Bonwell. It was spoken with respect and a sense of importance. I recall Stella Bonwell and my grandmother, Frances Bartlett, spending pleasant times together. I thought that they were splendid friends. I heard the names, Bill and Bea Bonwell, and knew that they were good people, by the way my grandparents, Sam and Frances Bartlett, and my parents, Sam and Lois Bartlett, spoke of them. When I was in the hospital in Wichita for a week, Bea came to visit me and provided an activity that made me feel I was helping her with a project. Later I realized what a nice thing she was doing for me to keep me from being bored. She pointed out that one of her sons, Chuck, was working construction during a summer between college years, and that I could watch him outside the hospital window.

Many years later, I came to realize that the Bonwell family was not only a family held in high regard by my family, but that the Bonwell family was also part of my family. Stella and Frances were first cousins. Bill and my dad were second cousins. That would make Bill, Chuck and me third cousins. What a fun moment when all that information was pieced together!

First, Chuck and I made contact. Then one thing led to another, until the day in July 2008 when Bill, Gloria and Amy came to Kansas City. We arranged to meet and I had a wonderful time getting acquainted with each of you. I understood quickly why the Bonwell family was so appreciated by my family. You are genuine, sincere folks, and with whom it is very interesting to converse. It was an honor and a pleasure to meet Bill, Gloria and Amy that day. I learned that Bill's time was said to be limited. As it turned out, our first get-together with Bill was also to be my last with him. I am grateful for that opportunity.

I pray for God's strength and peace to meet your family's needs at this time. I hope that we will stay in touch.

Sincerely,  
Frances Bartlett Holst  
Kansas City, Missouri



21 September 2009  
Amy,

When I was at Bethel I got sick during one of the January terms and had to drop out for that month. I went to stay with your parents for a few days while I recuperated. One evening while watching television, Bill noticed that the movie "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" was on. I had never seen it before and so Bill told me I needed to stay up and watch it with him. But he wanted to warn me that he always cried at the end. Now, I was 18 years old at the time, and while I knew in theory that grown men could cry, I had never witnessed such a thing. Nor could I believe that Bill would be brought to tears just from a silly movie. I assumed he was teasing.

So we both stayed up to watch the movie and at the end of the movie Spencer Tracy's character gave a monologue about how his character knew exactly how Sidney Poitier's character felt about Tracy's daughter because that's exactly how he felt when he married Katherine Hepburn's character and that it didn't matter what anyone thought, it only mattered how they felt about each other. I looked over and Bill was crying.

Liz Johnston



19 September 2009  
Susan Ellis' remembrance at the Art Museum celebration:

### BILL BONWELL

I am an attorney. I looked it up: Bill graduated in 1952 from KU Law School. I graduated in 1979 from Washburn Law School. He was born in 1927. I was born in 1953. We are of a different generation, but, it just didn't feel like it. When I returned to Wichita after Law School, I was hired by the Legal Aid Society. Many years later I learned how instrumental Bill was in starting Legal Aid in Wichita. When I first started practicing law I did not know Bill Bonwell but I learned that he was on the local Ethics Committee of the Wichita Bar Association. I also learned that if he called you: you took the call without making him wait and you did exactly what he said. No questions. It wasn't until later that I realized he tried to help attorneys solve their ethical "problems" before they went to Topeka for formal actions. He is pretty well known in the Legal Community for his work on the Ethics Committee. I never received one of his calls. I started practicing law with Bill in 1988 and that lasted until I left the firm in 2004. We practiced together for over 16 years. When I joined the firm, I still didn't really know him. Our relationship progressed from colleagues, to friends, to my mentor to practically-a-family-member. I think we grew closer after I left the firm.

During the time that we practiced together, we had various staff members. I remember many of them coming to me in the first week of their employment and asking about Bill. They seemed to think he could be a little gruff. I always told them he is gentle and to give him a chance. And - they always did. Up to the very end, three of our long-time staff, Cathy, Terry and Sandi, and Bill and I met for lunch 3 or 4 times per year. He called us his Harem. We always met for lunch around the holidays. We would exchange Christmas presents. I remember a couple of years ago Bill ended up with Christmas presents that we packed-up for him in a pink Victoria Secrets bag and he left the restaurant carrying that bag. We all thought it was hilarious - but - he didn't quite get it. Once we explained - he proudly walked to his truck carrying his pink bag!

Last week Cathy reminded me of one of many Thanksgiving dinners he and Glo attended at my house. I assigned him the task of a center piece. He was having difficulty coming-up with something. So - one afternoon - at the office - he and our staff made a turkey out of a Clorox bottle - which he proudly brought to decorate the table. It looked just like it could have been made by a First Grader. In fact, one of my other partners, Tom Borniger, commented on "Look what little Billy Bonwell has made!" Bill generally was "up" to trying to meet whatever challenge he was handed, but, this task was quite a challenge for him.

When I joined the firm, Bill was adamant that I learn about technology. He loved his computer and wanted me to love mine. He was so patient in setting mine up and making it as easy as possible. Many times he told me that I needed to learn to "CONQUER" my computer. Well - I don't know if I conquered it, but, I learned enough to do what I needed to do. He always was available to fix something that I messed up - which happened a lot. For many years, my office was right beside his. He would pop into my office - unannounced - just to make sure I was using my computer and to verify that it was operating properly. One day - during the lunch hour - Bill was gone and I was in my office on the internet. All of a sudden pornographic pictures started popping onto my screen. I had NEVER seen anything like these pictures before! I tried to stop them but they just kept coming and coming and coming. I was mortified. All I could think of was that Bill was going to come back - pop into my office - and see that I was looking at porn. I was desperate and just turned-off the power. He, in fact, did return and did pop into my office and asked why I had shut-down my computer. I can't remember what I told him - certainly not the truth - but, he didn't believe me. Finally - I told him I was afraid to turn it back on. He was very concerned and asked why I was afraid. I finally told him and he just laughed and laughed and laughed. I don't know what happened but the pictures weren't there when he finally convinced me to turn it back on. I think he was a little disappointed.

My sister and I lost our parents in 1999 and 2000. Since then, Bill and Glo have just stepped in. At holiday dinners Bill always took pictures and Glo always brought food - and - we always sent home lots of left-overs. For my sister and brother-in-law's 25th wedding anniversary, Bill was proud to put together a video montage for me. Bill has been the fact-checker for my brother-in-law's tall stories. Bill has been the lottery ticket repository for the tickets my sister bought for everyone at family gatherings. Bill invited my husband to join his investment club many years ago - Alan currently is the president. Bill and my husband shared a love of wine. My family and friends have commemorative bricks placed together at Botanica because that was an important place for my Mom - and - my husband and I are charter members. Bill and Glo have a brick at Botanica commemorating their 50th wedding anniversary placed with my family's bricks. You see - Bill has grown on my family.

So - let me give you a few details about Bill:

Name: William Alva Boswell Jr. I never knew his name was "Alva." His Dad, W.A. Bonwell Sr., was my Junior High School principal. His Mom was Beatrice Colvin Boswell.

- Born: Newton, KS.

- Education: Wichita public schools, Wichita University and KU.

- Military: U.S. Army - Judge Advocate General Corps. Stationed in Germany,

- Marriage: Married Gloria in 1955.

- Children: 4 children that you have met.

- Siblings: Little brother, Chuck.

- Career: Practiced law for over 50 years specializing in probate and real estate matters.

- Hobbies: PIGEONS.

Just so you know: he was really proud of his kids. All of you could frustrate him - on occasion. But - he thought all of you were unique and were just a joy to him.

Glo: He really thought of you as his life partner. He attributed the success of his kids to you - not to his efforts. Since his death I have spoken with many of his colleagues in the law - although - to be quite honest: there aren't too many

left. I asked for one word to describe him. Here's what I was told:

HUMBLE — MAGNANIMOUS — QUIET — SINCERE — LOYAL — GRACIOUS — NICE.

I wrote an article about Bill in 2003 - as my mentor - for the monthly publication for the Wichita Bar Association. What I wrote remains true today: "Bill has taught me the value of thorough analysis and preparation, the merit of professional conduct in the face of pure frustration with the system or colleagues, the importance of technology in the practice, the need for integrity when dealing with counsel and clients and the significance of just being nice." He persisted in a long-term quest to teach me patience. We were still working on that ... I feel honored to have practiced law with him and humbled to call him my friend.

Susan Ellis



9 September 2009

... He leaves behind many friends who will always remember him as a true gentleman with a very giving nature and a man who did not know the word "quit". We will all miss him very much and wish his family the best in this very difficult time.

Randy Goodpasture  
Manager, World of Wings



7 September 2009

Gloria and family: Just learned about your loss today. Know that my thoughts and prayers are with you at this difficult time. Many hugs, De Hylton

~ De Hylton