



## Bill Burns

May 20, 1936 - July 26, 2004

William "Bill" Bonnie Burns was born to his parents Henry & Minnie (Davidson) Burns on May 20, 1936 in Brutus, Kentucky. He passed away on Monday, July 26th at the Wadena Municipal Airport. Bill enlisted in the US Air Force in 1955 and was stationed at the Wadena Air Force Station. He was united in marriage to Phyllis Dorothy Busker on June 9, 1956 in the St. John Lutheran Church in Wadena. Bill was discharged from active duty in 1958 and from the reserve in 1963. Since that time he has been an Art Teacher in the Wadena school system, retiring in 1994 after 34 years of teaching. Bill was very active in his community and had many interests which kept him quite busy. Bill was a member of St. John Lutheran Church, a past member of the Wadena Volunteer Fire Department and a member of the American Legion. He was also very active in the Wadena Pilot's Association. Besides his time spent flying Bill loved to work with his hands, painting and wood carving. He also enjoyed fishing, hunting and reading. His daily schedule included time with friends and former co-workers at the Boondocks Caf . At the top of his list was spending time with his grandchildren. Bill was preceded in death by his parents; Henry and Minnie; brother Henry Burns, Jr.; father in law Tony Busker; brother in laws Eddy French and Homer Roberts; and his sister in law Marlys Busker. He is survived by his loving wife Phyllis; daughter Shelley (Scott) Fischer of St. Cloud; sons Bill Jr. (Michele) of Canton, NY and John (Donna Pederson) of Fergus Falls; grandchildren Emily Burns, Elizabeth Burns, Mitchell Fischer, Jimmy Fischer, Erin Burns & Jason Burns; brother

Oscar (Mary Rose) of Manchester, KT; sisters Daisy French of Lexington, KT & Isa Roberts of Red Lodge, MT; mother in law Dorothy Busker of Wadena; sister in law Judy (Jeff) Busch of Eden Prairie; brother in law Don Busker of Detroit Lakes; nieces, nephews and a host of friends.

# Tribute Wall

“ *The Man With The Star Tattoo*

*He sits on a red bucket, converted to become a stool. Gray hat atop his balding head. Mesh netting in the back, a green fish, caught on a taut line, screen-printed on the front. He is innovative today, as most days. A long slab of semi-smooth raw wood becomes a table, lying across a wide, chipped trailer. My grandpa is quietly laid back but persistent. I see the same traits in my father - his son.*

*My grandfather's rough hands are deft, movements smooth, automatic, ingrained. He cuts into the neck of the dull emerald fish before him but unlike Mitchell's fish lying beside his there is no blood, no guts, no gore. Only the clean cut, the steady slicing of meat from skin, the cool, tender strips of flesh filling the tiny brown saucer. My cousin shows me the intestines. Makes me touch the dead eye. Squishy, like Jell-O, it oozes under the pressure of my finger.*

*Mitchell squeals. His shirt is splattered with blood. We both watch our grandpa's skilled hands. Hands I once explored so tediously, so big they could hold both of my small, white paws easily together while I squealed and writhed and gleefully, unsuccessfully struggled to wriggle away. I note the roughness now of the aging skin, the graying hair, the blue star tattoo between the thumb and forefinger. Things I once took for granted. Things I understand to be special now. A part of what makes him him. What makes me me. My grandma will cook this fish for dinner tonight and I am sure to eat too much. Stuff myself silly on my most favorite favorite food. And they are sure to grin and laugh at me, remind me of how I ate as a child, how fat I used to be. They'll ask if I can't have just one more piece, and I am sure to have one.*

*In the cabin again with the wood paneled walls and the blaring bright patio furniture, right there in the window for all the world to see. I dread the noises the cushions emit. Our sticky, sweaty child's legs sliding against wrinkled plastic. The huge fish mounted on the*

*wall. Black and white photo of my grandpa after catching it. A couch is new, and some wallpaper. The fish that sings when you press a button hangs next to the door. But for the most part nothing has changed since the last time I was here. Same lake, same cabin. Same grandpa in his saggy jeans and black socks, grandchildren crawling up and down from his lap as he laughs the same laugh, asks the same questions. Any new boyfriends? How's the basketball? Same grandma smiling, taking care of everyone, offering more food more drink. Telling me what everyone is doing, even if I can't remember the people she's telling me about. It feels good. To lie on the couch and smile. Soak in the familiarity, the belonging. The precious and often overlooked fact of sharing the same past, the same DNA, the same blood. If I am lucky I will inherit more than this. If I am lucky I will also inherit this kindness, generosity, creativity and humor. But I have already been so lucky.*

*I will sleep at the lake once again tonight. The scent of the breeze off the water, tapping of the rain, the musical humming of the wind, my grandpa's steady snore coming from the other room. These are my lullabies. These are my favorite lullabies, the things that make us who we are.*

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**Beth Edeburn** - July 26, 2004 at 12:00 AM

JK

“*Bill will never truly know how many lives he touched - through reaching out as an inspirational and talented art teacher , listening as a friend, or inspiring through his passion for flight. I feel honored to have crossed paths with him, as he was the kind of teacher that made you want to be a better student, and a better person.*

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**Jodi [Kaun] Kosel** - July 26, 2004 at 12:00 AM

EB

“ Dear Donna and Family  
So sorry to hear of your family loss.

*May memories give you comfort in your heart and bring smiles to your face in the coming months.*

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**Ethel and Pat Brown** - July 26, 2004 at 12:00 AM

RS

“ Mr. Burns was an inspirational teacher and friend who gave me the encouragement to explore new ideas in art and to pursue artwork as a career. I will always remember the way he put things in the simplest terms "just draw what you see". My most sincere condolences to his family and friends.  
God Bless.

*Ryan Stigman  
Perham, MN*

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**Ryan Stigman** - July 26, 2004 at 12:00 AM

PK

“ Mr. Burns was one of my favorite teachers. He taught me to dream of flying and to express myself through art. Walking into Mr. Burns' classroom during those difficult years was like entering the eye of a hurricane. He was a calm and caring person, a true asset to the faculty. I looked up to him.

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**Patrick Kollodge** - July 26, 2004 at 12:00 AM

TR

“ We both remember him so fondly. He was a "gentle giant" who subtly nudged his students to be better; not just better students but better people. He had such a kindness about him and a wonderful sense of humor. Heaven is better because he is there. He will be missed!

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**Terri (Loween) & Greg Reineccius** - July 26, 2004 at 12:00 AM

MK

“ One fall day I asked Bill whether he had time to paint two large posters for a candidate forum. I wasn't sure he still did such little projects. Not only did he create them with colorful paint, stars and symbols, but he refused to take any money, no matter how I insisted. He was generous with his talent and time, always cheerful. He was sincerely interested in my kids, asking about their latest exploits.  
And he listened well. He was so thoughtful of Phyllis. What a guy.

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**Mary Ellen Kollodge** - July 26, 2004 at 12:00 AM

BN

“ When I knew that a student needed a teacher with "soft eyes"; Bill got him or her in class. I will never forget how he accepted kids.

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**Bernie Nelsen** - July 26, 2004 at 12:00 AM

JA

“ *What a wonderful person, friend, teacher, and an inspiration to everyone he encountered. He believed in every student who passed through his classroom and always challenged and inspired them to develop themselves to the fullest. He taught me a great deal about art, but even more about life - thank you!*

*He has been called by God for a greater purpose, however, he will be deeply missed, but never forgotten. All of you will be in my thoughts and prayers.*

*God's Blessings, Jennifer Clark Anderson*

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**Jennifer Clark Anderson** - July 26, 2004 at 12:00 AM

JC

“ *What a great guy who will truly be missed. Your family will be in our thoughts and prayers. He has be called by God to a better place.*

*Jim & Michelle*

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**Jim Harrison & Michelle Clark** - July 26, 2004 at 12:00 AM