

# MY STORY

## BILL BLUMBERG

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Welcome to our CaringBridge website. We are using it to keep family and friends updated in one place. We appreciate your support and words of hope and encouragement. Thank you for visiting. I'm Theresa Blumberg, wife of Bill Blumberg. I've resisted establishing a CaringBridge site but believe the time is appropriate to share news of Bill's health and updates with you.

On September 19th, we received a scary diagnosis of metastatic melanoma for Bill. Despite a prognosis of a year or two to live, the 3 immunotherapy and 10 whole brain radiation treatments have left Bill very weak and fatigued. A bout with Flu A after Thanksgiving further taxed his body. Bill signed a contract for palliative care last week so he can continue treatments and consult with his doctors. It also provides in home visits by a nurse who can advise Bill and me as he battles his disease. While our hopes remain for the treatments to give him some quality of life, he has become even more fatigued and weak recently.

Bill has lived a great life! Raised by loving parents, Alvin and Peggy, along with his siblings, Al and Janet, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Bill graduated high school with academic and athletic achievements. In his high school senior year, he was Christian Athlete of the Year much to his surprise (he literally fell off his chair!) He was later inducted into the Greater Chattanooga Sports Hall of Fame.

Bill and his brother were the first Jewish siblings to simultaneously attend the United States Air Force Academy where brother Al played on the golf team and Bill ran on the track team. After graduation, they became C-130H pilots serving in Vietnam. Sadly this assignment exposed both of them to Agent Orange which latently lived in their bodies manifesting in various cancers in their later lives. We lost Al 5 years ago.

As a 24 year old C-130H pilot, Bill flew 53 combat missions into South Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand. He flew the Peace Talks delegation into Hanoi, North Vietnam and was a member of the advance team for repatriation of US Prisoners of War from North Vietnam home to the United States. Bill flew the last US aircraft out of Saigon when he participated in Operation BabyLift in April 1975 and the evacuation of Saigon, South Vietnam. He upgraded to Instructor Pilot in the C-130 then transitioned into the Recruiting Service which brought him to Lowry AFB, Colorado.

In August 1980, Bill met me at the Air Force Academy Officer's Club at lunchtime. Bill was at the Academy that day in his capacity as an Admissions Liaison Officer. I was there accompanying a fellow JAG (AF Lawyer), Russ, on a pretrial hearing. Serendipity led us to have lunch at the Officer's Club that day. When Bill saw me walk into the room, he told his tablemates, "I'm going to meet that Captain!" He confidently strode over to our table and tried to engage in conversation with Russ (who graduated a year ahead of Bill). Russ was rather dismissive of Bill's greetings. I felt a bit sorry for Bill that Russ was not engaging with him. Undeterred, Bill asked me my first name and where I was stationed arming him with the information he needed. Me being in Air Force uniform gave him my rank, last name and profession. Bill then left the table. He called me the next morning at the Lowry JAG office and 3 years later, we wed.

Six months after our marriage, Bill became medically disqualified from flying. Bill's intellect, talents and aviation experience led him to work in many different capacities. I was so impressed with his versatility as he landed positions ranging from working on the Space Station; implementing TQM at Lockheed Martin; serving as Vice President for Charters of Frontier Airlines; President and GM of an aviation training company; and ultimately working for United Airlines training pilots on 737 aircraft and then flight attendants in emergency preparedness. Bill also formed his own International Aviation Consulting company in 1996.

Bill's parallel military career after leaving active duty included flying C-130s for the Wyoming Air National Guard, serving as an Individual Mobilization Augmented (IMA) to US Southern Command and the Air Reserve Personnel Center; a Joint assignment at US Space Command; and Regional Director for 8 states as an Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer. He mobilized as the Air Force representative to the New York City Regional Operations Center during Hurricane George in this final assignment. He retired at the rank of Colonel, same as his brother and Dad (US Army)

For 33 years, Bill simultaneously served as an Admissions Liaison Officer(ALO) for the Air Force Academy, a job he loved interviewing students seeking appointments to the Academy. For a period of time, he overlapped with his brother Al who was Commander of the Southern Colorado ALO's while Bill was Commander of the Northern Colorado ALOs. He was twice recognized as the Outstanding Liaison Officer for the Nation.

The most gratifying life role for Bill is that of Father to our son Bart and daughter Zayne. Bill fostered their tremendous academic achievements. As a student athlete himself, Bill engaged them in various sports from an early age and throughout their school years. Bill attended virtually every practice and game in t-ball, basketball, softball and track meet events when they played throughout school and college. He often served as the statistician or cameraman in support of their teams. Bart played several intramural sports and volunteered as a coach for 5th grade girls basketball teams throughout his college years while earning a degree in Biology at Colorado State University. He graduated debt free from college largely due to scholarships he earned through his enlistment in the Colorado Air National Guard. Zayne majored in Engineering Physics at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois while playing varsity softball throughout her college career. She too graduated debt free largely due to her academic scholarships. Both are engaged in promising careers. Bill had the joy of escorting ZZ down the aisle as she wed her love, Zack Schony, last October. Bill's next desire is to see Bart commissioned as an Air Force Officer upon completing training in mid-February.

Our family loves travel which Bill arranged and often allowed us to fly "non-rev" due to his employment with the airlines. Fall breaks trips, travels to the kids' competitive sports tournaments and cruises or trips in the Caribbean, Mexico, Hawaii, Europe, Alaska, Ecuador, The Galapagos, Peru, Canada and Iceland with the kids or just the two of us created special memories we will all treasure.

As an Academy grad, Bill served as President and as a board member of the Denver Quarterback Club supporting the Academy's sports teams. He held season tickets to the football games and often took Bart and Zayne to the Academy to participate in sports camps or to attend various games. He also loved poker playing often with friends as well as teaching Bart and Zayne this important life skill (smile!) Bill and his brother taught Bart and Zayne how to golf. Al, the superior and avid golfer, would be astounded by Bill's game since he held his own yet without playing nearly as much as Al. Bill's other interest is finances. He listened closely to his father's advice in the discipline of earning, saving, and investing money which he parlayed into his adult life maximizing the fruits of 2 public servants' labors.

A life well lived! While we pray it continues, we are all in God's hands. Bill's sister, Janet, has been a lifetime source of joy for him and loving, supportive sister to him in this trying time. My heart goes out to her as she contemplates the loss of her sibling.

Family, friends and neighbors, we appreciate you for reaching out to support us during this difficult time and love you for it. My sister, Peg, has agreed to help me administer this site and post from time to time as we surround my Bill with love, support and prayer. As we start a new year, it is not in sadness, rather, in hope for successful treatments that give us more time with our beloved Bill.

*-<https://www.caringbridge.org/visit/billblumberg>  
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