

EDITORIAL

November 3, 2002, on a sunny Sunday afternoon, I was in a Best Buy in Kingston, New York when my cell phone rang. It was Helen Hulskamp, then managing editor, who was very upset. She explained that she had come over to Bill's apartment to see how he liked NYQ 58. She had used her key, as we all would do to enter the apartment, and found him slumped in his wheelchair parked at his desk. He had passed away sometime during the night. She said he was just sitting at his desk, the desk light on, his right arm hanging down beside the wheelchair, his fountain pen on the floor. Later I would find his notebook open to this page:

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(D takes out gun, checks chambers), *Am Dea Lo gun*
an S, means to pull this
~~What are you doing?~~
D. Pow!! Pow!! Pow!!
S. ???
D. This is just in case the Rapist comes while I'm here.
S. Yes? *(D returns gun to holster)*
D. Meanwhile you and I ^{is} going to play *S. ???*
amazing a little game. *I didn't know*
S. What kind of a game?
D. It is a Rape Museum exercise
D. We're going to pretend that I am the rapist.
S. You?
D. Me.
S. Why?
D. Because if you pays attention maybe you can learn what to do when the real Rapist comes.
S. Yes?
D. So the first thing what we do is, I ~~will~~ go outside and come in again.
S. Yes?
(D opens door, goes out, closes door after him. S puts chain lock on door. After a moment the buzzer sounds, SANDI goes to door)
S. Who is it?
(S opens door on chain lock)

When I arrived at the apartment on 14th Street, the sun had just set. Helen was still at the apartment with several police officers and a detective awaiting my arrival. The lighting was dim just as Bill had kept it when he worked, his chair on its side, rubber gloves and some gauze on the floor. And his fountain pen was still there. We were not allowed to take anything from the apartment, but still managed to take his electronic organizer and the few papers we could readily find and pocket before the apartment was sealed. After speaking with the detective, we went down to the Chelsea Gallery—"the restaurant" as Bill always referred to it.

At the restaurant we sat, catatonic, trying to eat our hamburgers in some Frit-zian, mechanical motion in silence. My mind was on what to do next. I found Maggie LeBlanc, Bill's cousin in Massachusetts, in his electronic organizer that I had taken from the apartment and went outside the restaurant to make the call.

Just the week before, Helen, Malachi Black, and I had met with Bill and he had asked to go to the park (on 8th Ave.) to sit for a spell in the cool autumn sun. Malachi and Helen went toward a bench as they were slightly ahead of us in deep discussion. Bill motioned for me to stop a few benches away from them, I locked the brakes on the wheelchair and sat down. We talked about the weather and the pigeons for a moment and then out of the blue, he began reflecting on the document that he had had me sign to assume control of the magazine and what should happen if he should die. Then as quickly as he had started talking, he became very quiet and just smoked for a moment, staring off toward 8th Ave., but obviously looking into space. After a very long pause, he said, "yes, you are the one to do this." I quietly accepted this. I wish my silence were out of some form of humility, but I really could think of no response. I remember that we simply just sat together for a long time in the silence of the city.

One of the reasons we were together was to celebrate getting issue 58 to the printer. It had been over 6 years since issue 57 and now, especially with the work of Helen, we had successfully retrieved the magazine from a precipice on which it had teetered for many years. Bill was thrilled that issue 58 was coming out and that the magazine was set to continue.

The summer of 2002 proved to be very active for the magazine. About a year prior, Helen Hulskamp came on board. Because of her expertise with computers Bill made her managing editor. Together she and I had designed the look and layout of the nyquarterly.com website. While she did the coding to create the site, I did all of the database entry of the contents of each issue along with scanning all of the issue covers. That spring we had received a gift from a private donor that would allow us to put issue 58 together, thereby breaking the six year publication hiatus. Bill put most of the issue together, while Helen, Malachi Black and I did much fine-tuning of the issue, choosing a number of the poems and doing much of the necessary editing and layout.

Both Helen and I had attended the United States Postal Service's class on bulk mailing; together with Malachi, the three of us managed to get the issues packaged, addressed and sorted in Helen's apartment in Queens. We then took a car service to the bulk mail processing center in Manhattan, a large expansive complex where our Greek car-service driver drove us up the appropriate ramp to the second story of the building. We found ourselves in a line of trucks waiting to be directed to one of the bays. There must have been at least a hundred bays. Our driver rapidly became impatient and drove around the line of trucks only to be stopped by one of the officials directing the trucks. He made us wait our turn, as we should, and then directed us to one of the last bays in the building. You could see inside the loading docks directly into the maw of the rest of the building. It was an expansive, multistory mass of conveyor belts and systems for moving the mailbags from floor to floor. The noise was incredible. We backed the car up to the bay and immediately unloaded the bags. As soon as we were done unloading and had paid the driver, he got in the car and took off, screeching down the ramp to our left. We waited a bit and finally a worker came along wearing ear protection. We yelled at him above the noise of the beast in the background and asked where we were to put the bags. He motioned to a hole in the loading dock. We threw the bags down the hole and then went to pay the bill as we had been instructed in our class. After finding the clerk, we were asked where our bags were. We said that we had been instructed to throw them into the hole at the loading dock. They immediately said, "Not the hole!" A call was immediately made and a supervisor was summoned. Alarms sounded and suddenly the several stories of massive conveyor belts and systems came to a grinding halt.

After about 15 minutes of silence and everyone staring at us, the supervisor returned down one of the open elevators with our bags on a hand cart. He directed us to the appropriate place and then just as suddenly as they had stopped, the entire organism of conveyors and systems ground slowly back to life. When we arrived at the area to which we were directed, a black man wearing a fedora chewing on an unlit stogie in the corner of his mouth took our paperwork. He asked where we came from, we said we had put the bags down "the hole" by mistake. Without looking up from the paperwork, or removing his cigar, he simply shook his head from side to side and said, "The hole, mmmm, mmmm, mmmm. Who told you to throw it in the hole?" The hole was apparently quite famous. We apologetically gave him our bags of NYQ 58's, paid, and walked off into the city.

Outside the restaurant I got Maggie on the phone. I stood at the curb and related the bad news. After a long pause of quiet, we immediately set about what needed to be done as no prior arrangements had been made. We didn't even know everything that needed to be done. We both simply began with more notifications.

In the years prior to getting the issue to the printer Bill had been gradually taking me into his confidence regarding the magazine. Bill never showed anyone the entire picture of the magazine, he had always kept that to himself, perhaps out of a fear of being ousted or overrun. But now he was giving me more and more projects to manage, like moving the back issues again.

For one of those moves, Malachi, another fellow, and I returned to Neil Smith's barn in upstate New York and transferred all of the back issues, including those from upstairs, from the barn into a storage unit in Hudson, New York. Ironically, the storage unit was behind the strip mall that Peter Arcese and I had gone to when we first moved half of them upstate from Brooklyn several years before.

After paying a number of years' storage cost, Bill insisted that we move them elsewhere. Peter offered his parent's garage, so off we went, back upstate, back to the strip mall, to load the truck once again and move them to Garden City, Long Island. This trip would prove rather costly, however, as I had arranged to store the truck overnight in a parking lot on Beach 116th Street in Rockaway Park before the final leg of the trip to Garden City. When we arrived, the lot was full and a wedding was just letting out of the Surf Club catering hall. As I tried to quietly drive the truck past the wedding party and through a hairpin turn, it snagged one of the guest's car's right rear fender. Between the scraping sound, and my initial not noticing, the attention of the crowd at the wedding turned to the accident and away from the bride and groom now standing at their limo looking at us. The guest was very gracious about the accident and we settled it fairly as there was not that much damage, although I can't help but wonder how many wedding photos we are in.

To date, the back issues have been moved twice more since Bill's death. One of which included a "pick and sort" brigade lined down Peter's parent's driveway where a small army of volunteers sorted and re-boxed the good copies and tossed those with water and other damage, thinning the boxes to less than two hundred. The garbage stack on the sidewalk was the width of the lot and as high as the pick-up truck that was dispatched by the city to retrieve it on special detail. I understand a bribe was necessary after their fourth trip, but don't know for sure.

It took six months to the day for me to be appointed administrator of Bill's estate. During that time acquiring this legal status had become a fulltime job. Early on I had gone to the 10th Precinct and plead my case to a Lieutenant, who relented based on professional courtesy and allowed me into the sealed apartment with a police escort. The officer he sent was a rookie and we talked shop in the squad car on the way to the apartment. I only spent about ten minutes in the apartment, but retrieved as many documents as I could find for both the magazine and estate. The apartment would remain sealed after that until the court released it.

I spent much of my time researching Bill's family, drafting my own affidavits, and even at one point showing up at the hall of records with so much paperwork and confusing the clerk so completely that she finally just opened the door to the file room and said, "Here, you look." I met many helpful people during this trying time. The most notable were the clerks at the Surrogate Court who were much more helpful than they are rumored to be. I came by their office so often, usually right after getting off work first thing in the morning that when they filed into the office to go to work they would see me having coffee on the steps and say good morning. It got to the point that when I answered the phone the morning the judge signed off on the paperwork to finalize the case I was greeted with an ecstatic "We did it! The judge signed the papers!"

At last we were able to get into the apartment and get the rest of the necessary records and documents, as well as finalize issue 59. I opened Bill's apartment to his friends one last time so momentos could be had; we then boxed his papers and books and stored them with the back issues. The rest was left behind when I closed the door.

On the Monday after Bill died Helen received a note from him. He had apparently put it in the mail on Saturday afternoon. It was only then that we knew for sure that Bill had not only seen the magazine return to life, but had given us a final commission and blessing to carry on:

Helen, I read through NYQ #58, cover to cover, and found the most marvelous astonishing thing about it was not the lovely 4-color cover and formatting and variant type styles (excellent as they all are) but the poems themselves.... The poems show a diversity of finesse and mastery that is so rare (or nonexistent) in contemporary poetry today. Thank you.

I had been enrolled in the Union Institute and University's Ph.D. program prior to 9/11. After 9/11 I had to take a leave of absence for my job at the Statue and had just returned to the program about 6 months before Bill died. With Bill's death, I was left with a major decision as there was not enough room in my life for both the magazine and the Ph.D. I set to work compiling issue 60....

Raymond P. Hammond