



Thank You, Bill Mansel, for Sharing Your Life With Me



Who was Bill Mansel? He loved to play with words. He turned everything into puns. I think he was the originator of "dad jokes." The better his mood, the more elaborate the puns.

He loved board games, especially the dominoes game "42" and Scrabble. He loved family outings and street fairs.

Bill introduced our family to vacations. I was raised frugally. To me, vacations were trips to visit family; you drove, maybe even packed lunch to eat on the way, and when you arrived, you visited with the family members whom you came to see, and then you drove home. Bill liked to visit family, but it was important to him that we went on vacations where the goal was just to relax and have fun with just our family. We went to Galveston, San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, New Orleans, Las

Vegas, and Orlando. We went on a family cruise. He and I took trips to New York and Philadelphia. He loved to travel to try out a restaurant he had seen on TV or heard about, or he just liked to go for a drive and visit with each other. He hated that I fell asleep on long car rides instead of talking with him. He loved festivals and museums.

Despite the vacations, there was no place Bill would rather be than Texas. He has never understood how anyone could choose to live in the other 49 states, let alone in another country. He was fiercely patriotic, and that meant not just the United States but also the great state of Texas.

He thought I worked too hard — not just too many hours, but too intensely. He used to announce to the office that we were taking an office coffee and hot chocolate break, and he would insist that everyone in the office stop work for long enough to take a cup of their preferred beverage and relax in the lobby and visit. I have a habit of working through lunch, not because I have anything against lunch but because I get caught up in what I am doing and I forget. That drove Bill crazy. When he was still well enough to come into work, he and I went out to lunch once or twice a week. Sometimes, he would pick up lunch after I declined and suddenly appear over me at my desk with whatever he had gotten, glowering at me until I put away my work and stopped and ate with him. After he retired, I tried to stop by for those lunch dates, whether at home, in dialysis, in the hospital or rehab, or in the nursing facility. He was always glad to see me, and seeing him made my day better.

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Continued on Next Page

Bill and I loved to watch movies together. He adored going to the theater and had a bigger appetite for movies than I did, so he took Justin to movies that he knew I would not be interested in. He loved to get buckets of popcorn. I never bought popcorn at the movies until Bill (frugality again).

I got a list of the top 100 movies produced in the first 100 years, and we started watching them together in the evenings. I think we watched about 80 of them.

He loved to have friends over. Raising five children and running an office, I would forget to make time for friends and relaxing, and he reminded me. We would be at church and talking to friends, and he would tell me, "Why don't you invite that family over for dinner?" So I did, and it was wonderful. He loved to barbecue or cook for a crowd. Nothing made him happier than to have our house filled with friends.

He loved me. And I always knew that he loved me. We had been dating six weeks when he told me in the parking lot at Denny's. We had been to a Gladys Knight concert, and afterward, we wanted to go out to eat. We got to the restaurant and we sat in the parking lot for a moment talking, and I was telling him something embarrassing. I don't remember what it was, but I was having trouble getting the words out, and he thought that I wanted to say that I loved him, and he told me, "Don't worry, I don't mind going first: I love you." That wasn't what I had been saying. I hadn't even thought it, but I looked back at him, steady and reassuring and dependable at a time when nothing in my life was, and I realized I did love him, and I said the words out loud back to him before I even formed the thoughts.

We went in to eat, and he started talking about going to a jewelry store. I finally stopped him and asked what, exactly, we needed to go to a jewelry store for. He stared back surprised and said, "An engagement ring for you. If we love each other, don't you want to get married? I'm sorry, I guess I never asked you. I'll get down on one knee if you want," and he started to get out of the booth.

"No! Not at Denny's!" And I was laughing because it was such an unromantic place. I had thought about marrying Bill. I started dating specifically to find a husband because I needed help. I needed help with my children, and I needed a supporting adult in my home and someone to make decisions with and to love me and mourn or rejoice with me. I wanted to get married, but we had only been dating for six weeks. I had not thought we were even close to making this decision. So I was a bit in shock and bemused because suddenly we were talking, very practically, in a way that made clear we had both been looking at each other as potential spouses from our first meeting.

**"We are
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"I need to stay in my house. I don't want the children to have to change schools, and they need to be able to see their father regularly," I said.

"I thought about that. It will be a long commute for me; a little over an hour each way, but I can do it. If it gets to be too much, I will get a different job," he said.

"And I need to keep the name Bolton, at least professionally. I have been practicing law for nearly 15 years, and this is the name people know me by," I said.

"I am okay with that, as long as I can introduce you to my family and close friends as Ruby Mansel," he said.

I went home and turned the idea over and over in my head, and I realized I felt mostly relieved. I did want to marry Bill Mansel. We set a date for July 28, about 3 1/2 months after our first communication on Match.com. It was crazy to move so quickly, but it felt right. I was sure it was the right thing to do, and I have never once, for even a moment, regretted it.

Bill did formally propose to me, with music, on the grounds of the Houston temple, but when I think about our getting engaged, it is always the evening at Denny's that I remember. After that night, there was never a moment when I wondered how Bill felt. I knew that he loved me and the children, that he wanted to marry me, that he would always be there for us, and that he would do anything he could if he thought it would make our lives easier. We had good times and bad ones, but never once, from that moment, did I wonder if things were going to work out or how he or I felt about each other.

I could talk to him about the difficult things in life. We disagreed about some big issues, but we could always talk about them. His being gone is terrible, but his dying was terrible, too. And he was dying for so long. That was the worst part — watching him die slowly. It wasn't a steady decline. There were so many slow, hard-fought recoveries, only to be followed by a sudden, lurching fall. And I never knew how far we were falling. He might be sick a few days, or he might end up in the hospital bed, pale and unresponsive, unable to even hold his phone or feed himself. And I would usually be sitting next to him, frantically researching what was wrong this time, as if his entire recovery depended on me and not on the army of doctors and nurses that came by to see him. Bill could never understand why I did that and why I couldn't just accept him as he was instead of always trying to make him push harder for recovery.

But I am like that. I accept nothing if I think it could be better, and wasn't there something better than dying in slow pieces? I made this process so much more difficult for Bill than it had to be because I could not accept it, and he so completely did. He had lived a good life and always followed his conscience. He had a strong testimony of God, and although he did not want to die, he was not afraid to.

We were only married for two years before his health began failing. He had a little blister on his foot, and it ended up with him being in the hospital and rehab for a month and having part of his toe amputated. That was when I started worrying that he would die. Within another year, his kidneys failed, and he was on dialysis. His energy level and interests started to decline.

As his health declined, he sometimes got moody. He quit suggesting that we go places. He could do less and less and lost the will to try. I am confident that I kept him alive several years longer, and he had many moments in those years that he enjoyed, but also many bad ones. I hope that my children remember the man who drove to Florida with us when we were engaged. It was for a family reunion. I put him in charge of a room of six male cousins, all between the ages of 6 and 8, and he did not hesitate a moment. He was thrilled to be part of our family.

I hope they remember the man who commuted an hour to work each way and still came home and made dinner or drove them to and from their activities. I hope they remember the man who won our family tennis tournament that first year and who convinced me that the difficult moments in their childhoods were just moments, and that they would come through their various crises, and we would still love each other.

I want them to remember how Bill invited their father to our home for holidays and how he was always friendly and welcoming to their father, even when that friendliness

was not reciprocated. Bill always wanted them to have a good relationship with their dad and encouraged them to love him, visit him, and be respectful to him. That's a lot to ask of a stepfather, and there are few who played that supporting role so well.

Bill was on the verge of retirement when I met him. If he had not married me, he would have spent his final years relaxing, visiting his relatives, eating out, and remembering the past. Instead, he spent them helping an unruly family stay together and working hard until he was physically unable to do all the things he had looked forward to doing in retirement.

Bill Mansel married into a home with five children between the ages of 7 and 16 and never regretted it for a moment. He provided emotional support and reliable, consistent love. I am assertive, opinionated, arrogant, and stubborn. I have a tendency to dominate conversations and to suck all the oxygen out of the room. Bill was old-fashioned. He saw his role as head of the household and had expected to be the captain of our family voyage. It cannot have been an easy adjustment, and he made it with great grace. He was proud of my accomplishments. He left a community that he loved and where he had lived for over 25 years to move into my world and help make a home for my children.

That first illness, two years after our marriage in 2014, scared me to death. I saw a life without Bill, and I worried that I would be overwhelmed again and life would be as difficult for me and the children as it was the day before we met. But he hung in there as the children grew up and went off to college and Nathan served a mission. Now, there is only Justin left at home for me to raise. And I'm glad Justin is still here. It's good for me to be needed by someone.

As the years went by, I loved Bill more and more, but my children grew up physically and emotionally, and I began to be less and less worried about how I could manage without Bill and worried only that I would miss him.



Because I always knew that we would not be living out the retirement plans we made together when we first got married. I began worrying that he was dying in August of 2014, and I never quit worrying about it until Sept. 11, 2021, when I got a call at 4:40 in the morning that the nurse at Park Manor had been doing her rounds and had found him dead in his sleep.

I love you, Bill Mansel. We are such different personalities that only God would have put us together. I will miss you every day until I see you again. Thank you for sharing your final years with me.

-Ruby

Overcoming the Impossible Task

Improving Your Mental Health One Step at a Time

Almost everyone at some point has encountered a task that is seemingly simple, but no matter what they do, they can't complete it. These tasks can be as straightforward as making the bed or something bigger, like cleaning an entire room. For many, this is an obstacle that they may want to do but can't, which weighs heavily on them and becomes detrimental to their mental health.

It's important to understand that the impossible task is not a sign of laziness; depression and anxiety can make any task feel much bigger and more difficult than it actually is. If you find yourself unable to do the things you need or want to do, try these techniques to help overcome your obstacles.

Break up the task.

When the overarching task feels daunting, breaking it up into smaller segments can help you manage it. If you're cleaning the kitchen, clean for only a few minutes at a time before taking a break. It might take longer, but the space will be clean at the end of the day.

Make the task more enjoyable.

Play music or involve your pet in some way to make the task fun or create a reward system for yourself. For example, tidying a specific



area of the house or folding a basket of laundry may earn you time to play video games or watch TV. Alternating tasks and rewards is a great way to overcome any task, big or small.

It can help to consider why the task feels so impossible, especially if you used to enjoy it. Try to remember what made it enjoyable and see if you can return to that state of mind. If the objective is not so urgent, determine its importance and if the task can be saved for another day.

When all else fails, you can always ask someone for support or even pay someone else to do the task for you. No matter what you decide, there are ways to defeat the impossible task.

Thanksgiving Dinner for All

How to Cook for Diabetics and Vegans on Turkey Day

Alongside family and football, food is often the highlight of Thanksgiving. But if you're cooking dinner for a large group, crafting the perfect menu can be difficult. Veganism and vegetarianism are more popular than ever, and it can be frustrating finding dishes that everyone can enjoy — or even eat at all, in the case of a diabetic friend or family member. Luckily, there are plenty of options to create an amazing meal for any group of diverse diners.

Diabetics

Thanksgiving is a stressful time for anyone who monitors their blood sugar. Sweet potato casserole and sugar-packed pies can tempt even the most diet-conscious diabetic. But undereating can be as unhealthy

for diabetics as overeating, so it's important to include appetizers in your Thanksgiving menu. Healthy options include raw vegetables and hummus, roasted nuts, shrimp cocktail, or a cheeseboard.

For the main meal, turkey is fine if you hold off on any brown sugar or honey glaze. Green bean casserole is safe as well, and stuffing can be included as long as you use whole-grain bread. For dessert, parfaits made with Greek yogurt, fresh fruit, and sliced almonds are healthy and tasty and can round out the perfect meal.

Vegans

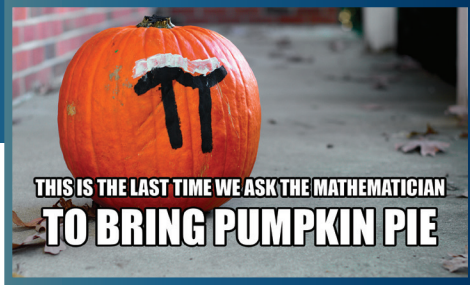
The best thing about cooking Thanksgiving for a vegan is that there are plenty of substitutes for classic dishes. Vegan turkeys are available at most grocery stores. It may not look like your traditional turkey since there are no bones, but it still cooks and tastes like a turkey. If a vegan turkey is out of the question, you can try making a mushroom Wellington or roasted cauliflower as a replacement.

For side dishes, vegan macaroni and cheese and roasted Brussels sprouts are easy and safe. As for dessert, most grocery stores carry a variety of gluten-free and vegan desserts at their bakery, such as nondairy ice cream and flourless cookies, that taste similar or identical to their gluten-filled, non-vegan counterparts.

The holidays are a great time to come together, and with these options, you can make everyone feel included in the celebration.



TAKE A *BREAK*



EASY PUMPKIN BROWNIES

Inspired by TheCookieRookie.com

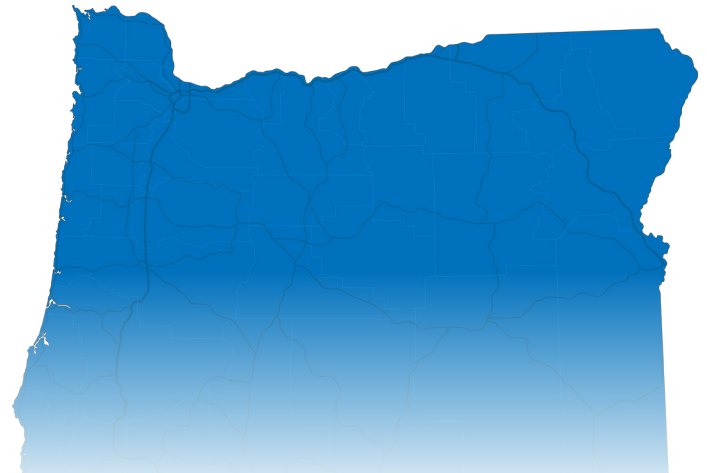
If you have a hard time choosing between chocolate cake and pumpkin pie on Thanksgiving, this 2-for-1 treat will knock your socks off.

Ingredients

- 1 box brownie mix, plus other ingredients listed on box
- 1/2 cup chocolate chips
- 1/2 can pumpkin purée
- 6 oz cream cheese, softened
- 3 tbsp sugar
- 1 tbsp pumpkin pie spice

Directions

1. Preheat the oven as directed on the brownie box, then make the brownie mix. Fold in chocolate chips.
2. In a medium bowl, combine pumpkin purée, cream cheese, sugar, and pumpkin pie spice.
3. Choose your pan as directed on the brownie box. Grease it if needed.
4. Pour half of the brownie mix into the pan and spread evenly.
5. Add the pumpkin mixture to the pan, evenly or in a pattern. Cover with the rest of the brownie mix and spread evenly.
6. Bake as directed on the brownie box, adding 10 minutes to account for the pumpkin. Test for doneness, and when your toothpick comes out clean, cool and enjoy!



CAN YOU LEGALLY MOVE A STATE'S BORDER?

THESE OREGON COUNTIES HOPE SO

Earlier this year, several counties in Eastern Oregon voted to break away from the Beaver State and join their next-door neighbor, Idaho.

Led by a grassroots organization called Citizens for Greater Idaho (or Greater Idaho, for short), this push to move the Oregon-Idaho border further west was fueled by an urban/rural and liberal/conservative divide within the state. In short, rural Oregonians, who are mostly conservative, don't feel like their state government, which leans liberal, represents their interests. However, rather than leave their homes and livelihoods behind for a government that better represents their values, they've decided they want to bring Idaho's values and government to them.

While the social and political dimensions of this movement are fascinating, the more pragmatic question of whether moving a state border is possible at all is an essential element to explore. What do legal experts say about the possibility of moving Oregon's state border? Well, proponents of the move shouldn't hold their breath.

While some counties have "voted" to leave Oregon, those votes don't hold any legal power. They're more like a poll, gauging interest in an idea before further action is taken. To make Greater Idaho a reality, however, both state legislatures and the United States Congress will have to approve the move. Idaho's state border is enshrined in its constitution, which means that in order for the borders to change, so would the state's founding document.

It's a tall bar to clear, but state borders have moved before. In 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that much of Ellis Island actually belonged to New Jersey rather than New York. The mere legal possibility, plus the affirmation of some representatives in the Idaho state government, including Governor Brad Little, is enough for Greater Idaho to continue hoping that they'll have a say in the kind of government they want to have.

(281) 351-7897

BoltonLaw.com

2441 High Timbers Dr., Suite 400
The Woodlands, TX 77380

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1-3 Thank You, Bill Mansel, for Sharing Your
Life With Me

4 Overcoming the Impossible Task
Thanksgiving Dinner That Everyone Can Enjoy

5 Easy Pumpkin Brownies
Can You Legally Move a State's Border?

6 How COVID-19 Worsened America's Opioid Crisis

How COVID-19 Worsened America's Opioid Crisis

Lockdowns Made Things Tough

Since the mid-1990s, over 500,000 deaths have been attributed to opioids. Many factors fueled the problem: corporate greed, economic recession, and changing attitudes toward pain treatments. Then came the COVID-19 pandemic, which escalated the opioid crisis to untold levels.

Data released by the National Center for Health Statistics on July 14 show a large increase in overdose deaths. Between December 2019 and December 2020, more than 93,000 Americans died from drug overdoses. That's nearly 29.4% higher than the previous 12 months. This means that, on average, 255 Americans were dying from overdoses every day.

One of the most notable things about the opioid crisis during the pandemic is the increase in death by overdose throughout the country. States like West Virginia have always been at the center of the crisis, but states like California, Arizona, and Colorado have seen shocking increases in overdoses. Opioid-related deaths

have gone up for men and women of every race and age, and the numbers aren't slowing down.



The question still lingers — why have opioid deaths increased during the pandemic?

The first reason focuses on the lockdowns. Many people were furloughed or completely cut off from work. This led to isolation, which is unhealthy for most people. For those already using opioids, they had more free time to use and their habits only grew worse.

Then, hospitals became overloaded during the pandemic. Those already recovering from addiction found it more difficult to get medical treatment when the pandemic started. Most medical attention focused on COVID-19 patients, and many former opioid users fell to the wayside. The impact was even worse if they had lost their job — which led some people to return to old habits.

As the pandemic continues to rage on, the opioid crisis has not waned. It could take years for opioid use to level out. And that assumes it won't continue to increase.