

Next Time

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Aging is not an unhappy time unless we refuse to fill it with the best of what we're able to do: the best book, the best conversations, the best company, the best public events, the best social life. When we do that we are alive all the way to the end. The end of what? The Next Time? Worth a thought.

Life does not begin the next day; it is here, remains our choice to enjoy or not.

Which reminds me of a friend of the past, Bill who for the year before my marriage, was my room mate in Denver. Blessed with a ample face, smile, intelligence, he had been discharged from WWII service with a medical pension. All remaining years Bill avoided employment for a wage, just doing things he enjoyed, reading, travel, music, life itself, and above it all, writing.

On leaving the military in 1945 Bill used the following year to obtain a Masters Degree in English (Creative Writing) from Columbia University.

Bill bemoaned that his advisor kept insisting Bill cease writing humor, stick to what he saw as Bill's strength, narrative, reporting and editorializing.

All remaining years using his favorite Pre-War Underwood manual typewriter, Bill completed a short story daily, sometimes several, plus working on various Opus pieces intended as Novels. Never a typo, triple spaced as then suggested by publishers, mailed unfolded. Bill submitted stories to every known publishing house, including one work for their consideration. He kept a box full of rejections, another with rejections that encourage his further submissions, and that smaller, acceptances. For years, no month passed when one of the lesser national publications did not include the Bill O'Toole by-line. The big houses that Bill wanted for his audience, eluded him all his life. That "Next Time" never arrived.

The small checks for what was published, a constant plus to his disability retirement income as Army 2nd Lieutenant.

Bill read widely. He completed the New York Times daily. A Brooklyn boy, Bill had that world of friends with active careers, their tales bit pieces in his creations. Never married, he including in friendship female Models of the Ellen Ford Agency, through his childhood school days with Natalie (Borokovich) Reed. Considered harmless, Bill would be invited to commercial "shoots" throughout Manhattan, picking up conversation, atmosphere, characters; those scenes and chit-chat also bit and pieces for his tireless writing. Those moments gave Bill access to the best of Manhattan life of the 1940 and 50 decades,

Then Bill moved to Hyannis, Massachusetts in formal retirement in his early 40's , still not that old. He and his sister had sold the family manse on Bayridge Parkway at Shore Drive, an overlook on the lower Hudson River.

In Hyannis Bill helped keep that small Post Office active through his purchase of vintage stamps, the volume of his daily postings, and rejections into his P.O. Box.

At daily Mass near the Kennedy compound, Bill occasionally chatted with his former classmate Steven Edward Smith, now wed the youngest Kennedy daughter, Jean. Other filler pieces for his tales, for these two Irish lads loved to talk of family and the Old Sod, as had their parents and most of their Catholic School.

In the 200th Celebration of the Declaration of Independence, two of my sons, joined in those festivities, wandered the eastern States. In Massachusetts they looked up Bill. He took them to dinner, listened to their adventures. I was pleased at these first hand accounts, not just news from Bill typed on paper.

No further letter from Bill.

I would learn several years later that Bill had died not long after he hosted my sons. There was to be no Next Time for Bill and me to share.

Concluding. Here is a pice Bill might have created.

"The Writers Group read weekly. Pieces are brief. Subject matter interesting. There is never a criticism of any reading, ~~no matter how political~~. Coffee and a cookie are shared at the conclusion of each hour."

