



Benton  
Hospice  
Service

## MEET BILL SHULZ

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by Karen Nousen

He sits quietly on the edge of the room—an unassuming guy in a yellow fleece vest and tennis shoes. You might not even notice him until he turns his twinkling blue eyes and big smile in your direction. Bill Schulz' modest exterior belies his remarkable historical experiences—and a playfully flirtatious nature.

Bill grew up during the Depression in St. Paul, Minnesota. His dad found work where he could, sometimes wiring houses for people adding electricity. His mother worked part-time as a nurse. Bill and his two sisters helped by tending the family's garden, canning their crop, and sharing their bounty with hungry neighbors.

At the start of World War II, Bill joined the Canadian Army. Censors didn't take long to figure out he was an American citizen. They persuaded him to return to the USA to avoid charges of swearing allegiance to a foreign country during war time.

A civilian again, Bill attended college, then enlisted in the US Army. After basic training, he was sent to England. Conditions were rough, including "starvation rations" for the troops. Bill remembers crawling out through a barbed wire fence and grabbing a lamb which was quickly butchered and prepared for officers who had the good grace to invite him to the feast.

Bill participated in the invasion at Normandy, with his unit deposited in waist-deep water at Omaha Beach. As fellow soldiers went down around them, most of Bill's unit was able to make its way ashore and into an apple orchard. Someone noticed strings tied between upper and lower branches of the apple trees. Jostling these strings would have triggered explosive charges, so the soldiers "tiptoed" through that orchard.

Bill was a machine gunner who didn't believe in killing. He recalls a German soldier approaching with a gun pointed straight at him. Bill laid down his machine gun, knowing he wouldn't be able to kill his enemy. Miraculously, the German soldier looked at Bill, lowered his gun, and walked away.

Bill survived D-Day only to fight in the Battle of the Bulge. Because of the bitter cold, Bill put a German combat blanket he had found under his uniform. When an artillery shell hit the house his unit was in, it blew the top off the building and sent Bill tumbling over a wall. He credits the German blanket with breaking his fall and limiting his injury. Still, his back was severely hurt.

Bill evacuated to Paris, then to England, and back to Paris again. After recovering, he traveled around Europe auditing personnel records for the Army. Once he tried trading his ration cards to a German woman for some vegetables. She ended up fixing him a

meal and sending him off with a hug and a kiss. Bill toasted the end of the war in Paris with Americans, Parisians, and a few German POWs.

Bill learned that his former Canadian unit had also helped storm the beach at Normandy but had been virtually wiped out. He says that getting through the war in one piece made him believe the Lord was saving him for something.

Bill returned home to finish his master's degree, embark on a teaching career, and start a family with his new bride, Marion. His hobby became developing new lines of grapes and apples. At one time he had the largest private collection of grapes in the Northwest, 66 varieties. His son Martin carries on Bill's fruit growing work today.

Now Bill lives on 20 acres near the "large metropolis of Wren," where he feeds birds, watches wildlife, and writes letters. Once a week he wows the ladies at the Grace Center in Corvallis. Bill enjoys his many visitors and keeps a big box of candy nearby to keep them coming back.

Bill appreciates the care he receives through hospice. "If I need anything, I just say the word." Hospice nurse Betsy Boren often accompanies Bill to his doctor visits and has brought him to the hospice office to meet the staff. "Everyone needs someone to open their heart to," says Bill, "and I'm able to with Betsy. She's just a wonderful person."

"Bill's a very gentle spirit," Betsy says of her patient. "He has a lot of love to give." In her six years with BHS, Betsy has found working with hospice patients extremely satisfying. "It's what I want to do for the rest of my life. If I can make a difference during a difficult time, then I know I've contributed something worthwhile."

Bill reports that "his heartbeat is slow, but it works, and that's what counts. I have lots to be thankful for." With that twinkle in his eye he adds, "I don't ask for much, but there is one thing I demand: a hug; and I usually get it."