In Memory of Billy F. Williams EHF

Let me begin with a simple description of the Man to whom this effort is dedicated. Not of imposing height at 5’7” around 150 lbs…always neat appearing and the kindest most magnificent friend anyone could encounter in a lifetime. Billy F. Williams was born on September 11, 1920 in Pensacola, Florida. He was one of three children born to Dora and Charles L. Williams. He along with his brother Charlie and Sister Lois moved to Dora and Charles L. Williams. He along with his brother Charlie and Sister Lois moved to Jacksonville, Florida in 1930 where he graduated from Andrew Jackson High School in 1937. Billy was first employed by the U.S. Navy at NAS Jacksonville as a clerk in the Commanding Officers Office. He passed away on October 30th at the age of 94.

He faithfully served the country he loved:

Shortly after WWII was declared he joined the U.S. Army where he qualified for Officer Training then entered the Army Air corps pilot training program. His subpar visual depth perception caused him to change from pilot to bombardier. He completed all training phases for bombardier at several bases around the country including Roswell, New Mexico and Mac Dill AAFB in Tampa. He eventually became a crewmember flying the B-26 Martin Marauder. He was assigned to the 573rd squadron in the 391st Bombardment group that established on January 15th 1943 becoming active on January 21st 1943 at Mac Dill Field in Tampa, as an active component of the US 9th Air Force. Then he deployed to Matching England in January of 1944 under the command of Major Lundgren. His squadron entered combat in February of 1944 flying missions to destroy airfields, weapons storage facilities, and bridges in France to prepare for the planned Normandy invasion.

On May 8th 1944 after flying a morning mission, Billy along with Captain Adams voluntarily became substitutes on another crew for the squadron’s afternoon combat mission to fill open Bombardier and Pilot positions respectively. They were shot down by flak on May 8th 1944 at 7:10 PM near their target somewhere over France. After bailout and while descending in his parachute, Billy was concerned that he would be hit by a bomb released by aircraft in formation above them, however he made it safely to the ground. Unfortunately he along with Captain Adams was captured shortly after wards.

Billy with many other World War II fliers ended up at Stalag Luft III -- the prison camp for downed airmen run by the Luftwaffe -- his last mission became the Longest Mission. This mission began at an airfield in England. It ended nearly a year later with the liberation of Stalag VIIA on April 29, 1945 by General Patton’s 3rd Army.

He relentlessly served the Industry he loved:

Billy upon return married Ann Hahn on June 6, 1945 in Louisville, Kentucky. Later in 1945 after the war ended they returned to Jacksonville. Billy and his brother Charlie entered the radio repair business in 1947. They began in a small area above the Western Auto Store servicing many of that firm’s products. Billy was the administrator and Charlie was the technician for Williams Radio Service. As their business grew and technology advanced their business evolved into Williams Radio and TV sales and service and relocated.
They became one of the leading area service centers and were greatly involved in exploding industry growth. They worked with other servicers around the area to establish standards and foster cooperation that lead to forming the first electronics service trade association locally known as the Jacksonville Electronics Technicians Society or JETS in the early 60’s. Shortly afterwards in that decade this local association morphed into The Florida Electronics Sales & Service Association of Jacksonville (FESA-Jax) becoming an active affiliate in a new State Association (FESA) with the same name in 1963. Through the following years Billy remained active in industry associations at all levels. He attended the first ever NESDA convention and served as President of FESA-Jax, President of FESA state, NESDA Region Director, Multiple committees for his state, local and national associations even through the loss of his wife Ann on Christmas of 1968. Not even this prevented him from serving terms in most offices of FESA-Jax and FESA. He remained the current FESA treasurer until June of 2009, creating an example for all. He has personally mentored many leaders developing them for leadership roles in our local, state and national association levels. He with others succeeded in gaining a Florida State Bureau of Electronic Dealer Registration to oversee and enforce ethical business practices in this rapidly growing non regulated industry in 1972. He married his second wife Ann and continued his association service. In April of 1993 Billy’s wife Virginia passed away and Billy although grieving continued serving the industry he loved. Billy was inducted into the Hall of Fame in January of 1994 at the FESA convention in Jacksonville.

**Billy loved his friends:**

By June of 1993 I knew the true value of this industry Giant as he mentored and supported me through most of our local and state leadership offices. In July of 1993 I developed a heart condition that required by-pass surgery. While waiting he encouraged me to go with him to the NESDA convention in Louisville, KY. After wards we became regulars at NPSC. My open heart surgery was done on October 4th 1993. It was early in the morning at 6: AM and they took me into a pre-op area to prepare me for the surgery. My family was sitting on a bench along the wall in front of me. To my surprise when they finished my prep and pulled the curtain back sitting right with my family was Billy. That has stuck with me every since. He had just lost his wife 6 months previously and he again took the time to encourage me when I truly needed it.

Although I’m not the author of the following and don’t know who to credit… it best describes my thoughts for the friendship we shared

“A Prayer was made before we met; not knowing who you would be I asked the Lord to send a Friend. One chosen just for me. I asked that they would be…Godly, with wisdom in his ways. A friend to help and guide me, through the trouble of the days. So often in life, we need someone to listen when we talk. Someone who will not condemn or judge but just encourage us in our walk. The narrow road we choose to follow may sometimes make us stumble. But a friend is there to catch every fall always teaching us to be humble. When I asked the Lord to send a friend, though many came and went. He gave much more than ever asked, for Billy is the friend he sent.” (Author unknown)

Although my heart is filled with grief I thank the Lord for sending Billy to be my friend

Sincerely

John Eubanks