



William "Billy" Hansford Bess II

November 12, 1956 - August 6, 2022

William "Billy" Hansford Bess II died Saturday, Aug. 6, 2022, at Vanderbilt Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee, after a brief illness. His sisters, Jane and Margaret, cared for Billy before he was transferred by helicopter on Aug. 3 from Southeast Hospital in Cape Girardeau to Vanderbilt Hospital.

Billy was born Nov. 12, 1956, in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, to Alvin Hansford and LaVonne Lewis Bess. He grew up in Poplar Bluff and graduated from Poplar Bluff High School in 1975. Billy played lineman on the football team. During the rivaled Poplar Bluff versus Sikeston, Missouri, football game his senior year, he rallied his teammates to victory by breaking a board with a karate kick on the sidelines. Billy graduated with a business degree in 1979 from Southeast Missouri State University, where he was a member of the Delta Chi fraternity. Throughout his life, he remained close to the Poplar Bluff community and his beloved class of 1975 friends.

Billy was baptized at First Baptist Church in Poplar Bluff. He worshiped at Mount Auburn Christian Church in Cape Girardeau, where he played the part of the Shepard in their annual Christmas play.

Billy worked in his family business, Bluff City Beer Company, for 35 years. As part of his duties, he lived in Kennett, Bonne Terre and Herculaneum, Missouri, before settling in Jackson in 1992. Billy made many friends in each community and appreciated the different qualities of each area. He served on the board and as president of the Missouri Beer Wholesalers Association.

Billy played a vital role in his family's business, but it would be remiss to limit

his life story to the chapter on the beer business. Billy could master any task that piqued his interest. He once took first place in a hog-calling contest and would demonstrate if you were skeptical. Billy was a black belt in karate. He was a great dancer and could be the life of the party. He had great comedic timing and could nail the punchline of a good joke. Billy was blessed with a keen memory and could discuss intricate facts on World War II battles. He was fascinated and disillusioned by politics in equal measure.

Billy became interested in the art of barbecue and studied to become a Memphis in May qualified barbecue contest juror. Billy had a secret recipe for barbecue rub that, alas, he has taken to the grave. Billy was an avid outdoorsman. His birthday fell during deer season, and he enjoyed hunting with his cousins at the Sites family farm in Blackwater, Missouri. Billy was an exceptional cook and loved to entertain his family in his home.

Billy loved fast, well-engineered vehicles and collected motorcycles and Ford Mustangs. In retirement, he started a commercial pyrotechnic business and was mastering synchronizing music with fireworks the week that he fell ill. However, what will remember most about Billy was his generous spirit and his robust, infectious laugh that could fill a room and draw everyone to his side to join in the fun.

Billy is survived by his sisters, Kelley (Mike) Innes of Poplar Bluff, Jane Ellen (Bruce) Powell of Jackson and Margaret Ann (David) Guettermann of Millersville. He enjoyed and lavished attention on his nieces and nephews. He leaves behind his beloved companions, Topsy, Cash and Doodle Bug.

Billy was preceded in death by his parents, Alvin H. and LaVonne Lewis Bess. Visitation will be from 5 to 7 p.m. Friday at Ford and Sons Funeral Home on Mount Auburn Road in Cape Girardeau. Funeral service will immediately follow, and Billy's brother-in-law, the Rev. Bruce Powell, will officiate.

A second visitation will be from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday at Fitch Hillis Funeral Home in Poplar Bluff. Funeral service will immediately follow with Billy's cousin, the Rev. John Harwell, officiating. Interment will be in the family plot at Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Poplar Bluff.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that you consider donations to the Joda William Bess Scholarship at Three Rivers College in Poplar Bluff.

Cemetery Details

Memorial Gardens Cemetery

3556 South Westwood Blvd
Poplar Bluff, MO 63901

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG 12. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Ford & Sons Mt. Auburn Chapel
1001 N. Mt. Auburn Rd.
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Funeral Service

AUG 12. 7:00 PM (CT)

Ford & Sons Mt. Auburn Chapel
1001 N. Mt. Auburn Rd.
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Tribute Wall

PS

“*Kelley and family my prayers and tears are with you in this time of grief.*

Pam Kneir Sharp

Pam Sharp - August 12, 2022 at 06:40 PM

PB

“*I'm so sorry for your loss.*

Peggy Bentlage - August 12, 2022 at 09:51 AM



“*Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of William "Billy" Hansford Bess II.*



August 12, 2022 at 02:32 AM

MW

“*I was a Delta Chi fraternity brother of Bill. Reading his obituary, it is clear Bill crammed a whole lot of living in his almost 66 years and was a Renaissance man with many varied interests. In addition, I remember his deep belly laugh and good nature. To his family, many friends, and Delta Chi brothers know that your memories will sustain and comfort you. Simply, a great guy. Take Care Everyone. Mark C. Whitfield, Carmel, IN.*

Mark C. Whitfield - August 11, 2022 at 05:11 PM

BB

“ Our deepest condolences goes to the family. Billy you left way to early but the Lord gained the best. Your friendship was very special. We did so many things together. Without you we never could have started the first “Authentic Oktoberfest “. You and Ken Parrett believed in the Munich Child who grow up next to the Original Oktoberfest. The first we started in Jackson in 2003 in the tent. Next year we moved to the Bavarian Hall and filled it. We cooked together and had so much fun for years. You loved the Bavarian traditions. You still had so many plans after retirement, but your health slowed your down. Now you are healed and will live forever. We will miss you here, but will be together again. RIP Billy till then 🙏🌈❤️
Brigitte, Henning and Daniel

Brigitte Bollerslev - August 10, 2022 at 09:31 AM

MD

“ It so sad and hard to believe that Billy’s not coming home this time. I can still hear him calling from his front porch for his babies (Topsy, Cash and Doodle Bug) to come back inside. Billy never missed a chance to ask how everyone in the family was doing. Always adding a bit of encouragement when things were tough. I wish we had one more chance to chat so I could tell him how much he was loved and appreciated. RIP Billy you will be dearly missed. The Derrick’s

Michele Derrick - August 09, 2022 at 01:04 PM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of William "Billy" Hansford Bess II.



August 09, 2022 at 10:54 AM

J7

“ First, my sincerest condolences to the entire Bess family. I was honored my sophomore year to play guard next to this guy. My junior year I was moved to the other side tackle. He was always supportive and proud to be a Mule. For the record, when we went to play in Arnold against Fox, Billy also found some bricks (the school was building a classroom) and broke several with his head. I guess that was pre-game warm ups. I have many locker room stories that we shared but best left in the locker room! Rest in Peace Billy. Maybe we'll gear up again some day and play for the greatest team ever.

John Boyd - Class of 76' - August 08, 2022 at 07:47 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of William "Billy" Hansford Bess II.



August 08, 2022 at 06:19 PM



“ Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of William "Billy" Hansford Bess II.



August 08, 2022 at 06:08 PM