

BILL HAM

This past week the music business lost an icon in the world of artist management. Bill Ham passed away on June 20th, 2016. For those of you not familiar with his name or his accomplishments please allow me the pleasure of enlightening you!

Bill started out in the music business being a record promotion man. He spent countless hours in his car driving from one Texas radio station to another delivering, and trying to convince the program and music directors at those stations, to play the new releases of the record label he was working for. Bill knew what a "hit record" sounded like and was successful in his promotion career.

Learning the music business from the perspective of record promotion gave Bill the experience to move up the ladder--into artist management. He found a rock group called "Moving Sidewalks" and dived in to artist management while still putting in the countless hours of record promotion to make a living and fund his band's development. Bill realized that several members of the group were extremely talented but that it just hadn't jelled yet.

Once Bill had found the correct "missing piece" he put the band together, changed their name and leased them space to write and rehearse. The band was called ZZ Top! But--how could Bill get the band off the ground? He knew they were great but they needed a huge push to get them over the top.

Bill decided the football stadium at the University of Texas in Austin was the perfect place. The only problem was that the University of Texas required a \$20,000 nonrefundable deposit to lease the stadium. At the time he may have had \$50 to his name--but he believed in the band so strongly that he wrote the check knowing that if anything went awry he would be bankrupt!

The concert happened--and, as they say, the rest is history! Bill had launched one of the biggest rock bands in the history of rock music. None of it would have ever happened if he had not written that "hot check" for

\$20,000!

Bill later went on to "roll the dice" on a young Texas writer/artist named Clint Black. As we all know, that prospect too turned out to be hugely successful!

I was fortunate enough to work for Bill's publishing company here in Nashville called Hamstein Music. His publishing company had over 100 Top 10 Country singles and 60 #1 records--all written by writers signed to Bill's company! Bill sold his publishing company in January of 2002.

While I worked for Bill's publishing company he was somewhat like "the man behind the curtain" in the Wizard of Oz. His staff in Austin, TX, were his buffer zone. They were all people Bill trusted explicitly and that he knew had his company's best interests at heart. I met him several times when we had our yearly meetings in Austin but I never really got to know him until 2005.

I was out of work and, at the time, didn't have many prospects. Bill was aware of that so he asked me to help him develop an artist he was working with in Texas. In 2005 I think I flew from Nashville to Austin and back over 30 times between March and the first week of November. It was grueling--but it allowed me to continue working in the music business and doing what I knew how to do.

Bill would personally come by my hotel room in the mornings and we would ride to his office complex where we would spend days auditioning band members and rehearsing getting the artist ready for road gigs Bill was arranging. As the "man behind the curtain" image disappeared, I was surprised to find a gentle, loving and caring human being that I cherished as a friend.

After I took a position with Evergreen Copyrights in November of 2005, I kind of lost contact with Bill. I regret that I did not make more of an effort to stay in touch. I still have his cell phone number in my phone and I will keep it there as a reminder of what a true friend Bill was! He will be missed by the music community as the shrewd businessman he was--but I miss him as the loving and caring friend he became to me. God bless you,

Bill on your ongoing journey!

All my best--

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