



William Joe Hilson

January 3, 1948 - September 16, 2020

The adventure began in early 1948 when Joe & Margy Hilson traveled from Zephyrhills Florida to Dothan Alabama to give birth to their second son ~ William Joe Hilson. He was three years behind Wayne, three years ahead of Paul and a typical middle child. Zephyrhills was home until a Christmas Eve fire burnt down the family grocery store and soon after the family moved to Miami Shores. His childhood was filled with playing sports ~ which he loved, going to school ~ which he tolerated, and doing chores ~ which he evaded. Summers were spent at Suwannee visiting maternal grandparents Georgia & Paul's river cabin. Days filled with fishing, swimming, and avoiding dangerous wildlife. He drove his parents crazy and mystified his brothers. Way back in the day Hilson delivered newspapers ~ first on a bicycle then a motorcycle. It was a morning route, so he spent the rest of his life sleeping late. He also had a wonderful job working for Archie at Bay Harbor Fine Foods a fabulous market filled with culinary delights that were completely lost on him because (in JoAnne's words....) he had the palate of a peasant.

Young adulthood brought new adventures. Hilson entered the Army during the Vietnam War and ended up serving in Alaska ~ for a boy from Florida this was torture, later in life he realized how incredibly fortunate he had been. Back in Florida after his service he floundered around for a while before getting a job with Airborne Express. This was a great logistics company ~ lots of young, enthusiastic people working together and having fun getting the job done. They worked together and they played together ~ on Halloween of 1977

Hilson went to a costume party (he was wearing jeans and a Hawaiian shirt, just like he wore every day) and things changed. He met Nancy ~ sensible, level-headed, in charge and practical ~ different from him in every way. Of course, they fell in love.

Fast forward here ~ Nancy lives in Tampa, Hilson in Miami. Hilson moves to Tampa. Nancy & Hilson buy a house. Two days later Hilson decides to leave Airborne Express and become an independent cartage contractor for Airborne Express ~ in Miami (did you note that the house was in Tampa? This is when Nancy's head explodes). Back to Miami he goes ~ and starts a trucking operation with three trucks. A year or so later, Nancy sells the house and moves to Miami to discover Hilson basically running a business out of his hip pocket. An Apple II+ and spreadsheets changed that pretty quick. As the business grew, it was suggested to Hilson that if he had a partner, they could secure more contracts ~ in comes Rick Fergusson, who was also a contractor for Airborne. They grew and grew and grew, eventually having contracts in multiple states with a few hundred trucks. Hilson was the guy that made everybody happy and inspired to get the job done, Rick was the nuts and bolts of the operations, Nancy was behind the scenes focusing on the finances and details. The managers and couriers were all terrific ~ it was so much fun. This went on for 30 years.

There were a few other business adventures along the way ~ a Beef O'Brady's in Hendersonville, a garage outfitting business in Tampa, a dumpster service in Brevard ~ Hilson was always looking for a new (but fun) business challenge, and dragged Rick & Nancy along with him.

On to family ~ being integrated into the Houha family confounded him. The first time he visited Merritt Island it took two days to get there from Miami ~ less than 200 miles away. He arrived to a big picnic along the river, lots of people, lots of food, lots of games and that was just the beginning. He was dearly loved by all Houha's. JoAnne and Hilson played innumerable card games. For a man that hated flying, Hilson became a world traveler at JoAnne's insistence. Suddenly he was traveling with a group of friends ~

barging in the Loire Valley, visiting Paris, visiting Italy. Hilson and Bob sat in bars all over Europe watching the world go by. Hilson loved Billy and desperately tried to save him from himself. Hilson loved Susan for her kindness and caring (so different from Nancy) and this was a good thing because Susan made his life so much easier as he was dying. She moved in with Hilson & Nancy and catered to all of his crazy wishes. Ask her about the Snake River steaks or the Breville cappuccino machine or the poker table with the automatic shuffler. Hilson loved his brother Paul, and like Billy, desperately tried to save him from himself as well. Hilson loved his brother Wayne, his wacky wife Carol and their three sons ~ Jamie, Michael & Danny. He especially took delight in Evie ~ the daughter of Michael & Jessica and his great niece.

Enough with details ~ let's move on to the essence of Hilson, having fun. Way back in the early days of Airborne a daily ritual was going to the convenience store after work, standing in the parking lot next to the dumpster and sharing a six pack with Fox and McDowell. They thought they were living large.

Fortunately for Nancy, a few shekels in his pocket allowed his tastes to mature and his horizons to broaden. He discovered that there were more interesting things to eat than well-done beef and potatoes ~ although he drew the line at cocks comb and organ meats (right Hanna?). He discovered that planes, trains and automobiles could take you to the most amazing places ~ Italy, France, Prague. Hilson loved being entertained ~ music, comedy, drama, plays, just being with friends.

Hilson loved people ~ if you ever met him you know this. Every friend was his best friend. He always said ~ if it's not fun, don't call me. And he wanted you to have fun with him. Thus, so many wild adventures and surprise events for all of us.

Hilson loved parties ~ especially his Celebration of Life in January of 2020. So much better to celebrate while above ground because any day above ground is a good day.

Hilson loved gambling ~ in retrospect, that explains so many cartage contracts near casinos.

Hilson loved Alabama football ~ Roll Tide!

Hilson loved fishing ~ especially at Suwannee with the guys

Hilson loved to bend the rules ~ actually he never thought the rules applied to him. Somehow, he made everybody his accomplice when he wanted something. What were we thinking?

Hilson loved to sing ~ all the time. Bonus ~ he was a wonderful whistler too.

Hilson loved cats ~ starting with Rufus all the way to Ferris aka 'The Wheel' who is perfectly shaped.

Hilson loved living in Nancy's world ~ apparently egg salad had a lot to do with that.

Hilson loved young people because he really was a kid at heart ~ Lori, Nicole, Jenny, Kendall, Hanna, Whitney, Sarah, Mariah, The Big E, Nicola and so many more.

Hilson loved nicknames and 'isms' ~

- Well-known Ray
- The Big E
- Young Dave
- Fran Holiday
- Houben
- Super-modulated-expialadocious
- Irregardless
- Redic and redun
- If it's not fun, don't call me
- It does not suck to be us (stolen from Fox)
- We're looking good, we're good, and we're looking

The outpouring of love on social media has been amazing ~ and so many describe Hilson so well:

- I wonder what planet in the universe Hilson is on now... it makes me smile thinking about the introduction he is giving them now about his expectations.

- Our rainy weather today ~ tears from the other angels in heaven laughing so hard since Hilson's arrival.
- A man whose light will shine always. His twinkling smile, his love of life, and his wonderful spirit made all our lives brighter
- You know whatever planet he is on now the party is just getting started! He was such a loving, generous man and capable of being a pain too. I loved him but could not have lived with him.
- Hilson was always full of life. I admire his zest, tenacity and sense of humor.
- Hilson will always be the most generous, joyful heart and every moment with him was a blessing.
- A beautiful soul. He had a joyful spirit, had life distilled to its true essence and lived life accordingly. We have all been so touched by his presence.
- What a grand guy he was. He savored life and got a delicious slice.
- I'll always smile when I think of him.
- We could all learn from this wonderful man ~ if it's not fun, don't call me.
- Cashed in his chips and went out a winner.
- On our life's journey there are a few people along the way that stand out... and Hilson is definitely one of those people for me. I absolutely loved every moment that I spent with that guy, he made life fun when he was around, and I wish there were more 'Hilson's' in this world.... he was one of a kind!
- I sure did love that man and his view on life.
- Bill was a beautiful soul! I will miss him very much! I was blessed to know him.
- Bill Hilson was the nicest and most generous person I've ever met. His smile and laughter would light up a room from a mile away, and the party never started until he walked in! He touched so many lives and changed them forever. I can't imagine this world without him in it.

How do you recount and summarize a life well-lived? There are many ways, but one good measure is your impact on others. Recent reflections of friends and family paint the picture of a man who is both generous and self-focused, quick-witted and oblivious, at times a teller of tall tales (Nancy says honk the

horn Hilson, then he says 'beep beep'), and with a wild imagination (that was absolute reality to him).

Hilson loved life and lived it well. But of course,~ all of us that know and love Hilson already know that.

OH, WHAT A LUCKY MAN HE WAS!

Ps.....be like Hilson

Check Hilson out here

YouTube ~ Hilson, Oh What A Lucky Man

Tribute Wall



“ *William Joe Hilson*

October 07, 2023 at 11:15 AM



“ *Hilson was an absolute joy to have around and always brightened my day when he came to eat with us. Nancy- y'all are in my thoughts and prayers and we love you dearly!*

Allison Bashford - September 29, 2020 at 03:42 PM



“ *The world has lost a unique individual. May he rest in peace.*

Gary Moore - September 20, 2020 at 04:16 PM



“ *Please accept our condolences. Hilton was always a happy, smiley guy to us. Hugs to Nancy.
Cortlandt and Brent*

Cortlandt Jones - September 20, 2020 at 09:58 AM



“ *Gary Reynolds lit a candle in memory of
William Joe Hilson*



Gary Reynolds - September 20, 2020 at 09:25 AM

JL

“ *HILSON was different than most of us. Unknown to me until recently, he was a deep thinker. He had a poetic way of writing that was beautiful and moving- even without punctuation!*
HILSON knew what he wanted out of life and what he believed. He never deviated. What he wanted most was to be loved and to have fun. We all enjoyed that ride with him because he knew that in order to receive love, you have to give it.
I believe he had his own religious belief. Different than conventional, but true to him. He believed in a second coming. Maybe not Devine, but he knew this wasn't his first rodeo, as evidenced by his crypt.
We have been so fortunate to have had such a unique human being in our lives. There may never be another. Jeanne Lewter

Jeanne Lewter - September 19, 2020 at 11:24 AM

TM

“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



Teri Morris - September 19, 2020 at 11:03 AM