Eulogy for William Charles Talbot  
For Memorial Services at  
Lone Tree Cemetery, Hayward California, June 26, 2004  
and  
Oakhurst, California, June 30, 2004

I have been struggling for words to describe my feelings for Bill beyond brotherly love. It came to me in a conversation with someone this past week. I adored Bill. I absolutely adored him. The grief and sorrow I feel without him is his hard to describe and even harder to bear. Bill was one of the great joys of our lives. We were best of friends and he was one of my favorite people along with my wife, son and sister. Our shock, pain and confusion from his passing are obvious and I don’t want to dwell on them this evening. Today I want to tell you a little about my brother, his life and about what he meant to us. I want to celebrate his life and pay him respect as a strong, loyal, caring brother and best friend.

Baby Brother

Bill was my Baby Brother. I remember the day he was born, I was 12 years old. My sister and I were at my Grandpas or somewhere near by and were dropped off at Eden Hospital to go visit, Mom, Tom and Bill. He was called Billy at that time. In reality I remember him before he was born when my mother and Tom were trying to decide what his name was to be. I still think it was me who picked out his name; I liked the name Billy best. This of course is coming from the memory of a 12 year old and is disputed by his parents.

Kid Brother

I have so many fond memories of my kid brother Bill, but mostly I remember how caring and sensitive he was. There are hundreds of times when he just showed how much he cared. Even as a small boy, he was always making me things and giving me pictures,
telling me how much he loved me. It’s probably hard to imagine Bill as being so
sensitive since he grew into such a big Man. Don’t let the rough exterior and casual
attitude fool you. Things, places and actions moved him and he cared deeply about his
family and friends. I was home on a break in college and was really upset over the recent
break-up with a long-time girlfriend. Little Billy was so concerned over my sadness. He
crawled into the bunk bed I was laying in, scooted up next to me and gently asked me
what was wrong. I tried to explain to him that I was sad as best I could describe to a
small child. He left and returned, crawling back into the bunk bed next to me with a
picture that he drew to make me feel better. It did. I was 20 or so, he was about 8.

As he grew up, he started copying his big brother. If I had a flat top, Bill had a flat top.
He was my biggest fan, and I of course was his. I adored him. One of my happiest
moments was sharing my college graduation with him. He was 11. I still remember him
dressed up in his little suit with his sunglasses and sharks hat on. I was so proud and so
happy to share that day specifically with him. Bill told his friends in Santa Barbara the
reason he shaved his head was because of his big brother. It’s a funny thing; I shaved my
head because my hair was starting to fall out when I was in my early 20’s. Bill had
awesome hair, really straight, blond hair that would turn almost white after a summer in
the sun. I never could figure out why he shaved it off. Now I know.

Bill loved to dance when he was a little kid and did excellent impressions of characters
from the show In Living Color. He had us laughing over and over again. He loved
Michael Jackson and I remember him dancing and wearing his Michael Jackson Glitter
glove. He even had a Michael Jackson record player. Growing up in what was essentially
Oakland, Bill learned to dance. According to his friends in Santa Barbara he still loved to
Dance as an adult and was more than happy to dance whenever the opportunity arose.

I always think of Bill when I see Corn Pops or Peeps at the store. Peeps are those nasty
pink and yellow marshmallow chicks that show up on the shelves for Easter. He loved
those things and since Michelle and I hated them he got his, and all of our!
Bill had a knack for always getting dirty. Within a few moments from getting out the front door, he already had a grass stain or something. It was even worse with food. He always had a drip of food on him. This continued on to his adult life. Somehow, the food would find his shirt.

Bill loved the outdoors. I used to take him on hikes when he was a kid, explain to him the natural history and geology of the areas we explored. I think he must of enjoyed it because taking hikes and exploring the outdoors is a love that he carried on into his adult life.

I am sure some of you with brothers remember fighting and sibling rivalry. Bill was so much smaller than me it was more like, I would come in the door and sit on the couch and he would jump on me and want to wrestle. I always won and had him wrapped up in some wrestling hold in a matter of moments. He would laugh and laugh when I had him in a hold. I don’t think I ever hurt him and we never, ever fought as brothers do. We never raised a hand to each other our whole lives.

**Brother**

That’s what Bill called me. Plain and simple. I liked it. I have no idea where he came up with it, but it was cool. He referred to Michelle simply as Sister and me as Brother. It stuck. As Bill got older we became relatively close in age, he was suddenly no longer my kid brother. He was becoming a man. He had a beard. He had tattoos. He had a wife.

He was really funny and I loved being around him. We used to laugh and laugh. Nobody would make me laugh as much as Bill. We have the same sense of humor. He would purposely say things just to get a rise out of me. Not in a mean way, in a funny way. He always used to ask me to take him to this horrible Chinese seafood buffet at this place in Castro Valley called Genghis Khans. He knew I hated it but and he would laugh and laugh as he pleaded with me to take him there.
We loved to play golf together and Bill always wanted to drive the cart. He was crazy and would go into 4 wheel slides, through sand traps, down hills and generally everywhere you shouldn’t go. Bill had no fear, especially not of the Marshall. The time he almost threw me out of the cart on a bridge at Willow Park was the last straw. I couldn’t play and have him drive, it totally rattled my nerves and I would choke! From then on it was me driving or he rode with Jared or Rob, the other two in our usual foursome.

As Bill became an adult, I tried to teach him a trade, just as my father had taught me. My dad, sister and I all taught him how to paint houses. He told me he liked to hear what each one of us had to say as each of us did things a little different. Every time he would work with me on a project, whether it was installing drywall, or a new sprinkler system, I taught him all that I new. I was pleased to put him to work helping me on a job just a month before we moved him to Santa Barbara. It was a great feeling when he was able to earn the money for his dive gear by painting houses. It really warmed my heart to hear that he had obtained a summer job landscaping in Santa Barbara and, according to his friends, was confident he could do the job because he learned when he helped his brother.

Bill was very thoughtful and intelligent. He would surprise me with his knowledge of current events, he read the paper and watched the news daily. He was more in touch with the events around us then I was. He had a knack for learning things and not forgetting them. I was endlessly impressed with this ability and wished I could have it.

Bill had many talents and tried many things. He liked to Ski, Snowboard, Wake Board, Water Ski and Surf. He was a good Ultimate Frisbee player with a lot of raw talent. He loved the ocean and recently became a certified diver. I found out when we were putting on my roof, that he was good with a saw and at carpentry.

He was an extremely hard worker. When he put his mind and heart into something there was no stopping him. He always worked hard when he worked with me at home or for me on paying jobs. His teachers and classmates commented that Bill was a get the job done kind of guy.
Bill was an extremely talented musician. He inherited the gift from his father. Bill could play any instrument he picked up and could simply listen to a song and then play it on his guitar. Bill played guitar, piano, clarinet and harmonica and generally loved music. One of the most amazing things happened on my wedding day. I was walking through the hotel lobby, prior to the ceremony. I was being pulled this way and tugged that way as I was at the mercy of the photographer. Suddenly, in all the confusion, I heard beautiful music. Someone was playing Beethoven on the hotel grand piano. I thought to myself, wow, that’s awfully nice of the hotel so supply a pianist, as we had not payed for one in our contract. When I looked over, I saw brother Bill with a crowd of dumbfounded admirers. I new he was a talented musician but had no idea. They were all standing in silence and amazement at his talent. I have had not less then a dozen people comment that is was one of the most amazing things and one of the highlights of our wedding day. It was truly memorable.

Bill adored my son, his nephew Lucian. He was so exited to hear that my wife Laurelyn was pregnant. While in the hospital, he called almost hourly trying to get an update on the status of the delivery. He really wanted to speak with Laurelyn and had a chance to do so. He was so exited and interested in the little guy when he came to see us on spring break. Lucian’s little features and little hands fascinated him. Later, when we went to visit him in Santa Barbara, he really fell in love with little Lucian. He commented on how good of a baby he was. Bill was funny, he asked if the baby was eating yet. Lucian was only 6-weeks old. He also asked what Lucian did. Does he watch TV? It was really cute and he radiated excitement and enthusiasm at being an Uncle. When Jen and Bill took us on a tour of Santa Barbara, Bill pushed the stroller up and down State Street as the proud Uncle, making sure to stand between Lucian and the traffic whenever we crossed the road. This is typical of Bill, being very protective and is fitting as his name, William derived from the Teutonic name Willem, means protector. Bill just couldn’t believe what a good baby his nephew was, hardly crying and fussing. He really loved Lucian.

One of Bill’s best qualities was that you could always count on him to give you a hand when you needed it. Bill was a good, loyal brother. He was always there for me.
Whenever I needed it. I could have the worst job in the world waiting for him and he would be there in an instant to help me tackle it. We could count on him and the family needed him. I admired this quality in Bill, and trying to be more like him in my life.

Oh, sure there were the annoying wet willies, the occasional misunderstandings, Bill eating all the leftovers in the middle in the night as he sleepwalked into the kitchen, leaving the toilet seat up and getting me in trouble as I got blamed for it. There were his occasional scrapes with the law and other bumps in the road, but through it all I just saw my adorable kid brother who I would do anything for and who would, and did, do anything for me.

**Bill’s Time in Santa Barbara**

The last really long conversation I had with Bill was the 5-hour drive down to Santa Barbara when we moved him down for college. Loading up my truck that morning with his stuff was truly a labor of love. On that day we recounted some of his memories of his travels and his desire to travel again. The drive flew by as we talked and talked and I enjoyed the time just with Bill. Having an expectant wife and a career, the only times we had alone together were usually on the golf course. Bill was so excited about the future, about his school and the prospect of visiting far away places with his new job.

I had such a good time exploring Santa Barbara with him when we moved him down. It was one of the happiest times of my life. I just felt so proud and happy for him, getting a chance to live the good life and be a college kid. It felt so good to help him get set up down there. Santa Barbara is good living and he deserved it. I had the perfect opportunity to help Bill out after all the times he helped me by building him shelves and installing some blinds on the windows in him and Jennifer’s new place. The days were filled with such promise, such hope. I was so proud of him for getting his scuba gear, getting his student loans and getting into the dive program. Later, when I heard he was getting good grades and leaning more about physics then I did, my chest swelled ever further with pride.
I am so grateful Laurelyn and I packed up the car with our new Baby and headed down to Santa Barbara. Lucian was 6-weeks old. When I told Bill we were leaving for Santa Barbara, he was surprised and asked me if I was serious. I said yes, we told him we were going to come down, we weren’t just saying it. He was so exited. Bill was a great host. He even postponed his Birthday party on the Beach for a day, so he could visit with just the family before we had to leave. According to one of Bill’s Dive buddies Jedd, a life-long Santa Barbara Resident, it was the biggest and best beach party he had ever been to. Jedd commented that only likeable Bill could be in Santa Barbara a few months could attract such a crowd and pull off legendary party like that. He enjoyed showing us around the town, his school and taking us to one of his favorite places, Butterfly Beach. We met some of if his friends at the beach, got sunburned and had a great time. Bill and I took a swim in the Ocean, talked about the Giants and hucked the disc as we had done many times before. Bill noticed that Laurelyn was stuck on baby duty and offered to take her on a walk while I tended to Lucian. He was always thinking of others and wanted to make sure she had a good time. While on the walk, he found a shell for Lucian to commemorate his first trip to the beach. Until yesterday, we thought the shell lost and it brought a tear to my eye when Laurelyn called me to tell me she had found it in her purse.

**Marine Diving Technology Program**

Bill loved his school and he loved his friends in the Marine Diving Technology Program. He was so exited to tell us about what he was doing and all the things he was leaning. He had a good bunch of friends down there, he told us all about them. They were a tight knit group that worked and played together. He was a good student and got good grades. He would have made and excellent commercial diver.

**Sand Dollar Foundation**

Students in the Marine Diving Technology Program are encouraged to help their fellow students with the use of “sand dollars”. If a student requires help, other students may help them by giving them a sand dollar. This sand dollar allows the giver to provide an
answer or help to the one in need. Just as in real life, Bill was always looking to help and rarely had a sand dollar left in his pocket to give. This didn’t stop Bill from helping, when he didn’t have a sand dollar, he would “borrow” one from another friend to give it to the person in need. This simple concept of giving assistance to others was the core of Bill’s nature. As a brother, he helped me time and time again with projects around the house or whenever I was in need. Bill and I liked to joke about how he tilled my backyard three times over 4 years preparing for the lawn we finally put in together this past fall.

In honor of his memory, Bill’s family is creating the Sand Dollar Foundation, a charitable organization to help those in need. The family requests Donations to the Sand Dollar Foundation in Bill’s memory. In this way Bill can continue to help people forever.

William Charles Talbot Memorial Scholarship

The first mission of the foundation is to create the William Charles Talbot Memorial Scholarship Fund for students overcoming adversity and making a change in their lives in the Marine Diving Technology Program at the Santa Barbara Community College. Bill’s dream of a career under the sea was tragically cut short but now he can give sand dollars to his classmates on into the future.

Adventures and Accomplishments

It is hard when a young person passes on. There is always a sense that their life was cut short and they missed out on so many things. It’s hard to find comfort in saying, oh they had a good, long life as is often said when an old person passes. However, Bill was a lucky boy. Not only did his brother and sister adore him, so did his parents and grandparents. Bill’s grandma Talbot, whom her referred to as “Darlin”, dragged him to the four corners of the earth. By the time he was 12 he had done many things that I have yet to do at the age of 34 and most people will never do in their entire lives. He toured Ireland at least on one occasion, staying in his grandmother’s cottage and visited all the famous sights including the cliffs of Mohr were he dangled his head over the edge. He
saw the London production of Phantom of the Opera and enjoyed his time in London and England. He went to Paris and enjoyed the Louvre, even as a child. After my mother returned from her visit to the Louvre a few years ago, they enjoyed swapping stories of exploring Paris and the great museum. He took a train up the west coast to Washington where they hopped a cruise to Alaska. Bill visited every state in the Union. His grandparents drove him in their mobile home. In the summer before 4th grade, when everyone in the California School System has a segment on the California Mission System, Bill’s grandpa and grandpa took him to every mission on the mission trail. Bill saw the original production of Cats on Broadway. He took a cruise on the Mississippi on a Historic Paddlewheeler. He stood on the exact union of the four corner states. At the time it was hard traveling but looking back on it, Bill really enjoyed it and readily would recount his adventures. He liked to discuss traveling, other cultures and far away places. Bill spent part of a summer in Hawaii with Michelle when she lived there. They hiked and swam and generally enjoyed the islands. Bill Climbed Mount Whitney and liked to tell the crazy tale of climbing to the top of Halfdome in Yosemite and back to the valley floor in one day. He spent many summers in Aptos, Santa Cruz and Capitola where his grandparents had a summer home. His straight hair would be bleached almost white and his green eyes would sparkle through his tan. He became and accomplished open water swimmer and a lifeguard while spending summers at those beaches. Having big brother and sister with drivers licenses certainly paid off. Michelle and I took him everywhere. Bill went to countless Giants games and 49er games, eating his fair share of cotton candy, malts and sodas. He shared my love of sports. Bill was practically raised on Tight Wad Hill and prided himself for never having paid to set foot in memorial stadium. Bill, Michelle and I all inherited Tom’s passion for all things Cal. We had family passes to Great America for many years and we would go all the time. I mean all the time. Bill spent a weekend with me in the dorms when I was in college and an entire spring break with me when I lived off-campus by the beach in Santa Cruz. Recently we traced our family history, and found out that our relatives arrived in the United States 10 years before the Pilgrims, pioneered Virginia, the Carolinas and Tennessee and were American Revolution and Civil War Veterans. We also found out our family was here before the colonials, our great, great, great grandma was a Cherokee Indian. Bill made many great trips with Mom and Stepdad Jared. There were the many trips to Yosemite and the golf
trips to Half Moon Bay, Bodega Bay and to Poppy Hills in Carmel. Bill loved to golf and one summer Bill and Jared golfed 5 days a week. I was jealous at the time and frustrated that my Brother kept out-driving, out-putting and out-playing me. I always told him he should have tried out for the golf team at school. For Bill’s 21st birthday we took a 5-day golf trip to New Mexico. We started a tradition of a spring golf trip that we had hoped to continue on into the future. He had no coaching and no lessons and could bring it on the course. Michelle and I had the honor of having Bill in both our Weddings. He was the co-best man in mine with my longtime friend Harlan. These are just my memories of what Bill had accomplished and I know there are many more things he did with his wife Jennifer, father Tom and family and friends here in Oakhurst. Although Bill left us as a young man, he did get a chance to do a lot of things, see a lot of places, touch many lives and enjoy life with his family and friends. For his time with us, and the life he had, I am grateful.

Final Thoughts

It’s funny, even though Bill grew into a big man, I still saw him as my adorable kid brother. I feel really happy that over the last 3 or 4 months, I made it a point to tell him how much I cared about him. I don’t know why, I just felt I needed to and went out of my way to show him. I did it by pointing out fond remembrances of when he was a kid and how cute he was. I would tell him how proud I was of him for his school and what he was doing with his life. I thanked him whole-heartedly when he helped me put in my lawn and put on my roof this past Fall. I feel fortunate. Bill was taken from me swiftly and it is a devastating blow. Although I have many questions about Bill’s passing, I know he knew how much he meant to me and to his family. My world has been changed; a source of joy and happiness has been taken away from me. Brother, you will never be forgotten and I will continue to adore you all the days of my life.

~ John Andreas Wolf