

Post from Chelsea Bennett, February 26, 2022



Stunned and heartbroken and hurt to hear of the death of my friend, Bill Verdier, this morning. I hardly know what to say, but he was such an important person to me, and I want to try to honor him.

I'd been thinking about him recently, anyway. It's been an age since I've seen him play. I think the last time was in July 2021 (the day before my birthday) when I took this picture of him and Eamonn. I've been wishing for the warm weather so I could join all my favorites at the pub again - could sit outside and listen to the music all evening.

I first met Bill, Jeff Taylor, and Jim Prendergast playing at McCreary's on my birthday in 2009. I was hooked. That's what started the last dozen years of me following the Irish music scene around Nashville, where I would meet lots of other great players along the way. Bill always stood out, of course. He was a walking encyclopedia of tunes. His talent for expression on the fiddle was unmatched.

I'll never forget the way he made me feel when he'd play "Hector the Hero." He clearly connected with the music on a soul level and that emotion spilled over to anyone who was smart enough to be paying attention. And, of

course, he was one of the players who would always make sure I'd hear the Kerfunten Jig, the tune that ever sets my heart soaring.

One of my favorite things to do is to take my notebook to the pub when there's a session on, and write whatever occurs to me while the players do their thing. I believe I do my best writing in this setting, even if no one else will ever see it.

I told this to Bill one time, and he said he felt the same way about me sitting there writing while they were playing! Can you imagine? What a class act. What an enormous talent. What a kind, humble man.

I'd often be in my cups by the end of a session night. So I'd usually let loose with a torrent of sentiment - how much I loved whoever was playing, and how great the music was. The longer I'd known the musician, the more effusive I'd be. So Bill got a lot of my highest praise. It was always sincere, but maybe a bit much for most people! So, the day after, I'd always feel a bit sheepish over my lavish words.

But today I'm thankful that I've told Bill how much he and his music have meant to me over the years. We were not close, personal friends. But Bill Verdier has been one of the most special people in my life. I am so sorry for Anne. I am so sorry for all of us.

Bill, you will be missed forever.

*Photo by Chelsea Bennett: Bill Verdier (right) and Eamonn Dillon at McCreary's Irish Pub and Eatery, Franklin, Tennessee*