

Bill Huggins' Story

A former president of the Texas National Guard, Bill Huggins was a giant of a man with a powerful presence. He was a retired Dallas police officer and Command Sergeant Major in the US Army. An excellent pilot, Bill owned Kitty Hill Airport outside Austin, where he built three grass runways and 70 hangars for private planes. After his wife died, he lived alone until 2003 when he developed a foot infection, a complication of diabetes that necessitated partial amputation. Shortly after the surgery, he fell and broke his leg. "Dad was in and out of hospitals and skilled nursing facilities for two years," said Bill's daughter, Judy. "In 2005, he was only in his apartment for one week and during that time he fell again and re-injured the same leg."

Bill suffered what his daughter called "hospital psychosis" – he didn't know the difference from one hospital to another. "He had such a strong personality," Judy recalls. "When dementia set in, he became even more demanding. In his mind, he owned and ran the hospitals and he would sit in his wheelchair in the hallway and bark orders to the nurses." Judy believed her dad was in the best possible place, yet she was not happy with how he was responding to treatment, especially the drugs. Worse, her dad had always been an avid outdoorsman and now he was confined to a second floor room with no access to open air. "He became

combative and stuck his foot in the elevator door trying to sneak out," Judy said.

When Bill became enraged and struck a nurse, the staff put restraints on him, transferred him to the emergency room, and then a psych ward where he was put on stronger sedatives. "It was the most devastating time of my life," Judy added. "My daughter and I knew there had to be somewhere he could go and be allowed outside. Everyone at the hospitals hands you 'canned books' with hundreds of care options. It's so hard to know what to look for," she said. Her daughter had a friend who was familiar with Silverado in California and suggested they go online to see if there was a Silverado community in Texas. "Silverado in Plano had been open only a month when we contacted them," Judy said. "I was in love with it instantly. I just knew it was the place for Dad."

Bill was still combative when he arrived at Silverado. "He thought it was his home – that he owned it and could order people around," Judy said. "Instead of being upset with Daddy, the Silverado staff introduced him to the construction team working on the outdoor areas. They let him 'supervise' the building of the gazebo."

Bill lived at Silverado for 15 months until he passed. During that time, he spent most days outside and engaged in activity. A highlight was a visit to a nearby airport with his caregiver,



Robert, who took him out on the tarmac so he could touch the planes and talk about aviation. Afterwards they went to Bill's favorite Mexican restaurant for lunch. "Silverado was amazing for Daddy and for all of our family," Judy recalls. "He got to hold his great-grandchild, who looks just like him. We were with him at Silverado for holiday parties and the staff became our extended family. Best of all, Daddy was happy. It doesn't get any better."

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