



March 2016

Dear Friends,

A few days ago, my friend, Bill Eakin, went to be with the Lord.

There are enough stories in my head to write a book. I'd like to share some of my memories.

On August 19, 1997, my wife, Fran, passed away unexpectedly. The next morning, I had the task of going to the funeral home to pick out a casket. With me at that emotional time was Bill Eakin. He drove an hour to help me with that awful task. Bill got me through that time by calling me nearly every day for the next year. One day in May of 1998 when Bill was speaking at a youth camp outside of Oklahoma City, a tornado went through and hit the city. I saw it on the news, and knew that I would not hear from him. But in the evening, I received a call. It was Bill. He had hitched a ride into town with a volunteer and found a pay phone. "I made you promise," he said, "and I intend to keep it."

Bill was defined by passion and compassion. His passion was for the Lord, and telling others, especially young people, about Jesus. It is safe to say that thousands of youth found Christ through a ministry that lasted over 66 years. At the age of 80, he still had high schoolers joining him for breakfast once a week.

A little bit below that was his love for the Cleveland Indians. He knew about nearly every player from the 1940's to the present. One of his greatest thrills was getting to meet Bob Feller at a spring training game in Florida. We went to more spring training games that I could count. For thirty years, until his illness took him down, he studied baseball records daily to know who to draft and who to keep in his fantasy league. "Trader Bill" was often near the top of the standings in that league.

But he was also defined by compassion. He loved people, and they loved him back. I would sometimes go with him to his favorite restaurant where everyone knew him by name, and even the cook would come out of the back to greet him. For many years, Bill and I were involved with Youth for Christ. Over spring break each year, we helped manage a trip that took kids to Vero Beach, Florida, for a week. Bill was always the evening speaker. On Wednesday night of each week, Bill would give an invitation for young kids. I would sit amazed as tears flowed, and kids opened their hearts to the Saviour. I still see some today whose life was changed on a warm Florida night. Upon news of his death, a man contacted me on Facebook to tell me that Bill had changed his life at that camp more than twenty years ago.

The Los Angeles Dodgers trained in Vero Beach during that time, and Bill and I spent many an afternoon relaxing for a few hours in the sun watching baseball. The Lord brought one of those young Dodger

players into our lives. Matt Herges had accepted Christ at a previous Youth for Christ camp a couple of years earlier. One night he came to the meeting and I introduced him to Bill. A friendship was born among the three of us that has remained to this day. Matt was an undrafted low minor leaguer with little chance of playing in the major leagues. In 1997, Bill and I met him in Phoenix, Arizona, while he was playing with the Albuquerque Dukes. We took an afternoon trip to the top of Phoenix mountain, and Bill surprised both of us by taking out a vial of oil. He dedicated Matt and declared that God had a plan for Matt to play in the majors. Matt not only did make it to the majors but lasted for many years, even pitching in the World Series for the Colorado Rockies in 2007. Matt has also become one of the most respected Christian men in baseball, even today as a pitching coach in the Dodgers' farm system.

There are more stories, but I'm out of room. One final note about Bill's commitment to Face to Face. He has held my hand in this ministry since its start in 1990, and even now I expect he is telling friends about it in Heaven. His year end letters have drawn responses from dozens of people who have in turn, supported the ministry of Face to Face. I will miss him, but in a strange way, I am not sad. He is home now. I was fortunate to see him one last time a few days ago and wish him well on his journey. I know I will see him again.

Thank you for allowing me to share the story of a great man. It has truly been a privilege to stand in his shadow.

Thank you for your prayers and support of the ministry he loved in Face to Face.

In His Name,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Rust". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Tom Rust