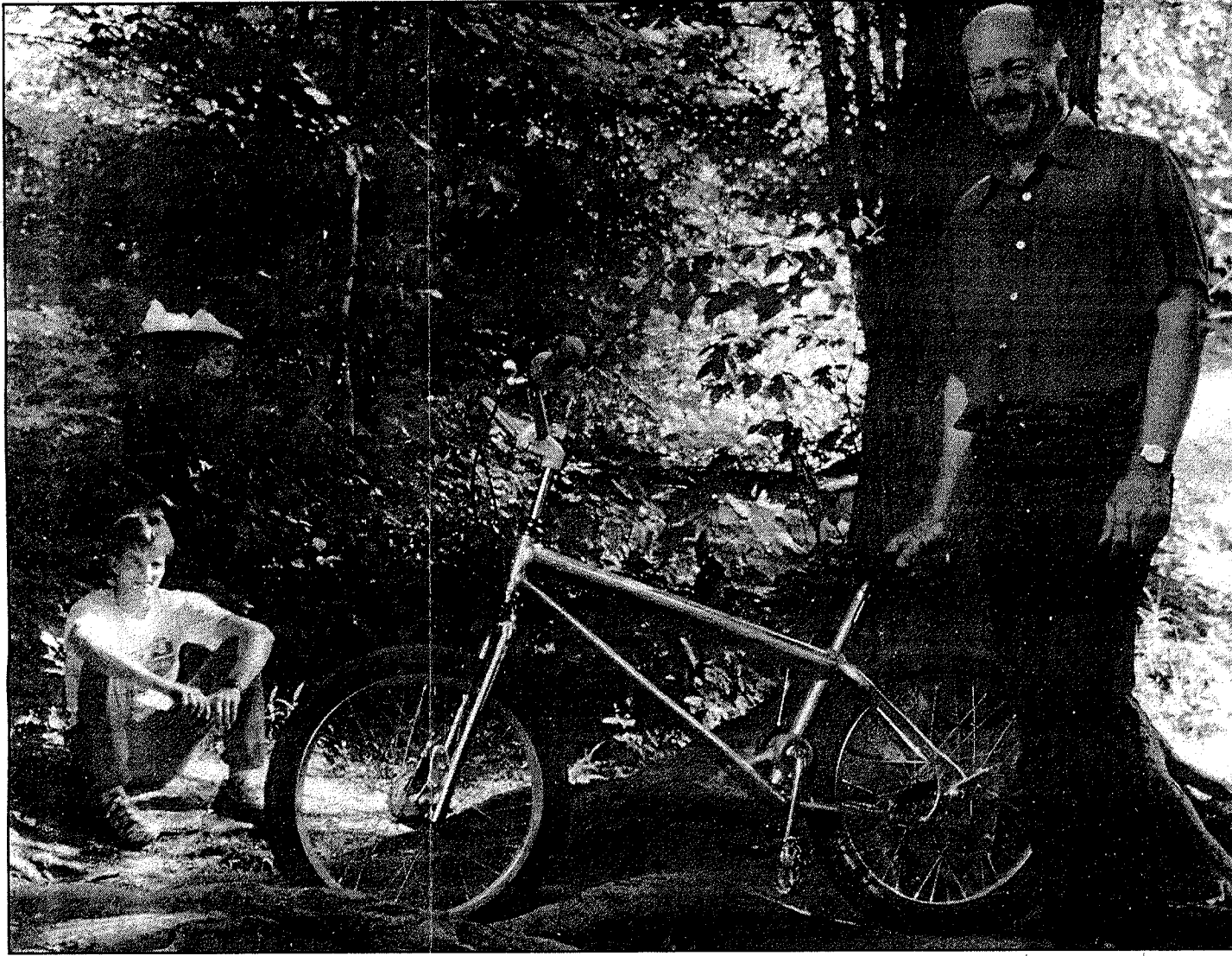


Two Wheel Dreamer ... The Reality of Bill Grapevine

Part one of a story about one of the most influential forefathers of the sport of trials in the US



BILL GRAPEVINE AND RYAN YOUNG (SITTING) POSE WITH BILL'S MAVERICK BICYCLE. (SUBMITTED) July 87

BY JIM ELLIS DEC. 2003

I met Bill Grapevine around 1966 while I was stationed at McConnell Air Force Base, baby sitting Titan II missiles in underground silos around Wichita, Kansas. After 24 hours on duty, I had two days off and often visited all the local motorcycle shops. Places like McNew's BSA, Nicol's Honda, Jim's Triumph, Hugo's Harley Davidson, and Erwin Capps' Checkered Flag Hodaka shop. I believe I first met Bill outside that Hodaka shop.

FREE SPIRIT

I knew nothing about him, but the more I learned, the more fascinated I became. He was quiet, friendly, soft spoken and easy going. Little did I know that underneath that peaceful manner was a man of fierce determination who knew what he wanted to accomplish. Bill had the perseverance and self confi-

dence to keep trying as he methodically overcame obstacles and approached his goals.

Bill Grapevine really was a free spirit, and an independent and creative thinker and dreamer. But unlike most people whose dreams and ideas often fade before they get really started, Bill hung on to his dreams and followed through. He often headed in unconventional directions with fresh ideas as he turned some of those dreams into reality. In other words, Bill accomplished things. He got results. He made things happen.

His enthusiasm for his projects and his motorcycle events was contagious. Over the years his circle of friends kept expanding. In the case of his ten Pastmaster's Vintage Trials, those friends returned year after year from all over the country, even from England. And Bill looked forward every year to seeing them again.

Bill was certainly devoted to his third daugh-

ter Gina, wife of Dennis Burnett, and to their children, Jordan and Emma. And he had a real warmth and respect for Gina's mother, his former wife, Maria.

EARLY YEARS, BOXING, NAVY

William Dean Grapevine was born in 1931 in Wichita during the Great Depression. I know little of his childhood except that Bill's love of motorcycles may have started with the old 4-cylinder Henderson he acquired at about 13 or 14. He and two or three friends would push it to the top of a hill, then all got on and coasted back down.

Bill grew up at a time when money was scarce, and for the rest of his life "earning money" never seemed to be a primary goal. His formal education stopped at the end of eighth grade, but that didn't slow him down. As an older teenager he took up boxing. As a skinny kid he fought in the bantam weight divi-

sion, won nearly all his fights, and was paid \$5 per match.

Bill was about 19 when he enlisted in the Navy in 1950 or 51. He started training in San Diego, California, and when he didn't like it, went AWOL (away without official leave). While heading back toward Wichita he decided that being AWOL was not such a good idea. So, Bill returned voluntarily. He was now behind his classmates in their training and the Navy was uncertain what to do with him. While he waited for them to decide his fate, he started hanging around the waterfront and the guys who were training for underwater demolition teams. Bill began participating in some of their training, including being ejected by compressed air out of a flooded torpedo tube, similar to the tubes in the bows of submarines.

JUMP STARTING A JET

If that wasn't unusual enough for a kid from Wichita, another Navy experience off the coast of Florida was even more extreme. Bill Grapevine had become a jet engine mechanic. And as the mechanic he often had to accompany the pilot on the first flight after the repairs were completed, an incentive to do the job right.

While in the Navy version of a T-33 trainer, the pilot bragged to Bill that he could "jump start" a dead jet engine by falling fast enough that the moving air would rotate the turbines. "I'll show you." He killed the engine, then nosed over into a steep dive. They picked up a great deal of speed as the Atlantic ocean rushed straight up at them, but the engine would not start.

The pilot then ordered Bill to pull the EJECT handle. The resulting explosion blew him and his seat through the canopy, his parachute opening in good order. Bill recalled the pilot drifting down, and watching the perfectly good airplane that he had just left crash at high speed into the sea. As Bill continued falling, he couldn't tell how large the waves were and therefore couldn't judge how high he was above the water. Fearing entanglement in the parachute's shrouds, he released the lines far too early, falling, as he put it, "a long way" and hitting the ocean "very hard".

SCRAMBLING, MOTOCROSS

In addition to his normal duties, Bill became the boxing coach at the San Diego Naval Base. On days off, he and his Navy pal Charlie Hill got involved in off-road motorcycling in southern California and northern Mexico. He rode his large Matchless in the first trials and scrambling events he ever entered. He and Charlie



FORMER WORLD CHAMP MICK ANDREWS RIDING THE 1998 PASTMASTER'S TRIAL ON ONE OF GRAPEVINE'S GRMs. ANDREWS AND GRAPEVINE BECAME GREAT FRIENDS BECAUSE OF THEIR MUTUAL LOVE FOR VINTAGE TRIALS.

← OLD #1

also tried desert riding and met such well-known riders as Bud Ekins and Steve McQueen.

But there weren't enough events to satisfy Bill, so he started organizing trials and scrambling events, both in California and across the border. In 1952 or 53 he heard about European off-road events over a short but rough course called "motocross" and started organizing them here, becoming one of the earliest organizers of motocross in the U.S.

INTO THE BULL RING

Bill liked Mexico, particularly when he got further away from the U.S. border. With his three years in the Navy over, in the mid to late 50's, Bill formed a stunt riding team. The Equipo Azteca consisted of Bill, Charlie Hill and Jack Fortney. They had colorful posters printed and put on their show in bull rings or on athletic fields. It included racing, sliding through corners like speedway, jumping over pickup truck beds, crashing through walls of fire, and whatever else they could think of.

At one show Bill, thought he could crash through a stacked wall of bricks. Unfortunately he didn't get the front wheel high enough and his head smashed into the bricks, knocking him cold. Fortunately, our determined but evidently hard-headed friend survived, but never tried it again.

There is no doubt that Bill, as quiet as he seemed, had quite a bold streak. He'd try things that most people wouldn't even consider. While living in Mexico, Bill got interested in the popular spectacle of bull fighting. Obviously the matador was the center of attention, the macho hero, and our free spirit couldn't resist trying it. So he started training as a matador and ended up facing young bulls on eight occasions. Although these were just training fights, the bulls were certainly real. Several years ago Bill showed me a photo of a slim young man in a fancy matador's outfit.

He really looked quite serious about it.

HARLEY K, ROAD RACING PARILLA, 3 BULTACOS

Bill's curiosity and interest in motorcycling was not limited just to motocross and trials, nor was it limited just to lightweight machinery. He did some scrambling in southern California on a Harley K, the predecessor to the Sportster. One event included a climb with a lip at the top that he would loft the front wheel over. At one point he got the front end too high and flipped the Harley over backwards, breaking ribs and a collar bone. After being in an upper body cast about six weeks, long enough he thought, he cut it off and promptly rode home to Wichita.

In the late 50's Bill tried another sport, road racing. He obtained a sponsorship from Cosmopolitan Motors in Philadelphia from Larry Wise, or more likely Larry's father, and rode a Parilla. It wasn't long, though, before he returned to off-road events.

Bill knew some Spanish and around 1961 read about Bultacos in a Spanish magazine, so he ordered two of them before there was an American importer. They were about 200cc, lightweight, fast, and had good suspension. Bultaco also included a 150cc bike that they wanted Bill to adapt for trials use. Those Bultacos may have been the first ever imported into the United States.

PAN AM RACING ASSOCIATION, PUBLISHING

To encourage U.S. and Mexican competition, Bill formed the Pan American Racing Association in the early 60's to help promote a series of cross-border trials and motocross events. It was an unusual format that took place on two successive weekends. It might start in Mexico with a trial on Saturday and the motocross on Sunday. All the riders would participate in both events. Then the following weekend the venue would shift to the United States, again with trials on one day and

motocross on the other. Bill competed, occasionally winning one sport or the other.

Even though Bill's schooling stopped with the eighth grade, that didn't stop him from writing about motorcycling. He had planned a series of booklets to cover all the varieties of cycle competition but only one volume, about scrambling, was written and published. It was about 5 x 7 inches in size, perhaps 32 pages, and included numerous photos of action and events that he and his friends had participated in.

Starting in the early 60's, Bill was the editor and publisher of a small newspaper called "Cycle Report". He wrote editorials, covered trials and motocross events in Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri and Mexico, tossed in international articles from European papers and ran local advertisements. The paper survived until about 1967.

HOME MADE SPEEDWAY BIKE

About 1962, because speedway cycles were rare and money was tight, Bill decided that if he was ever going to have a speedway bike he'd have to build it himself. Thus started one of the most creative phases of his career. The dream and the desire were there, and he knew the obstacles could be overcome by determination and persistence. Living in the Wichita area with its aircraft industry and numerous fabrication, machining and welding shops, Bill was in an ideal place for a creative and imaginative person to get things built.

The speedway project started with drafting paper as he made full size drawings. The frame was the biggest challenge, but Bill also had to design the gas tank, air filter box, exhaust pipe and other parts. Blueprints followed. An aircraft industry surplus lot supplied high strength 4130 steel tubing, aluminum sheet metal, bushings and hardware.

Some pieces went to the tubing bender while Bill measured, cut, and fitted the ends of oth-

ers. Then off to the welder. With the frame and other parts made, he sanded and painted the steel pieces and polished the aluminum parts. Then Bill assembled everything, adding the front forks, wheels and engine. These he either borrowed from his various parts bikes or purchased from suppliers or motorcycle junkyards.

DESIGNER'S CHALLENGE, OLD #1, LARRY BOWERS

I imagine that Bill's first home-designed and home-built motorcycle, such as the speedway bike, may have been his most challenging. And because he was at the very start of his frame building career, it may also have been his most exciting and satisfying. All the problems and unknowns had to be faced for the first time. Not only did he have to figure out the proper angles, dimensions and tubing wall thickness, he had to locate all the raw materials. Then find the skilled craftsmen, like tubing benders, machinists and welders to do the tasks he couldn't handle. Finally, Bill had to design a rugged set of jigs or fixtures to hold the key pieces of tubing, such as the steering head, in exactly the right position at the proper angle while the welding was being done. There is a great deal more to building a frame than meets the eye, and Bill had to learn it all.

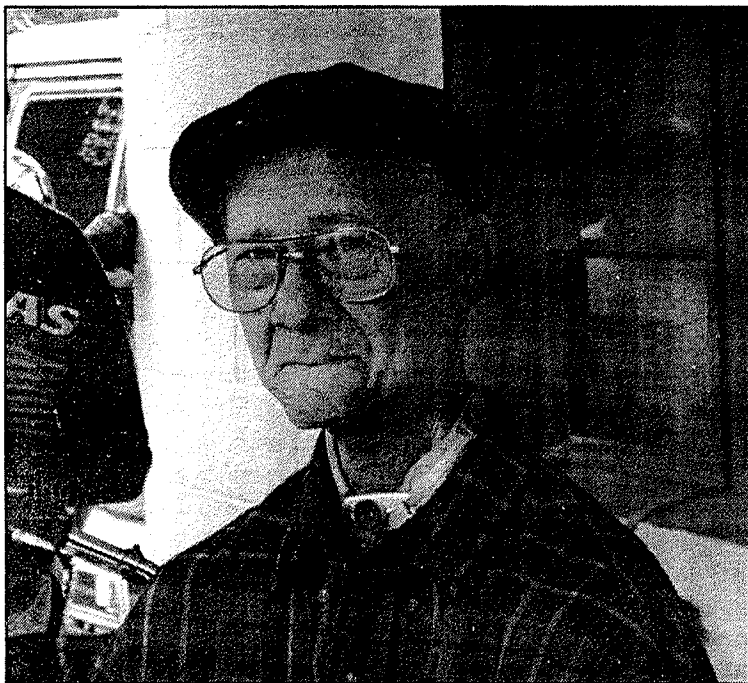
Bill's first observed trials motorcycle, affectionately known as "number one", was built in 1962. Like the speedway frame, it had a solid rear end. Because there was no swingarm, there weren't any shock absorbers or springs, thus saving considerable weight. Bill powered his first trialer with a smooth 175cc Islo engine. Like his subsequent frames the geometry was right and it steered well. Bill kept "number one" in running order, and loaning it to skilled riders like Dennis Burnett, Jerry Young, Ryan Young and Mick Andrews, won the Pastmaster Trial on numerous occasions in the 1990's, over 30 years after he built it.

When building lightweight frames, the quality, strength and durability of the welds is critical. Bill was fortunate to find an aircraft welder who not only made strong welds, they were also good looking. Larry Bowers, on the east side of Wichita, welded nearly all of Bill's frames from the earliest in 1962 up to the latest in 2000. Larry also did fine aluminum welding, working on most of Bill's gas tanks, air boxes and other parts up until 2002. That working relationship between the paper world of Bill Grapevine, the designer, and the real metal world of Larry Bowers, the welder, lasted for a remarkable 40 years. No doubt there was a mutual respect and admiration for each other's talents, as some wonderful finished products resulted.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH

Two Wheel Dreamer ... The Reality of Bill Grapevine

Part two of a series by Jim Ellis about one of the sport's founders



BILL GRAPEVINE AT HIS CABIN AT THE PASTMASTER'S TRIAL.

MAVERICK, HODAKA, CHAMPIONSHIP TRIALS

I believe Bill's favorite motorcycle concept was probably his lightweight, Hodaka-powered Maverick. It was a double cradle design, with two downtubes descending from the steering head and curving under the engine. The very first Maverick frame, in 1963, had no swingarm, so the downtubes extended straight back to the rear axle mounts. It was elegantly simple and was the design that Bill revived in 1995 when he started making vintage Maverick replicas. About three dozen Mavericks were built in the early to mid 1960's and all but the first one had a swingarm and shock absorbers.

Bill liked using Hodaka engines. They were lightweight, easy to work on, reliable and affordable. A brand new 90cc engine, complete with carburetor, cost about \$100. Built in Japan, the manufacturing quality was good and spare parts were readily available. Later, 100cc and 125cc engines became available.

The Mavericks could be set up for motocross or trials, and in the early 60's were much lighter than all their competition and handled better than most. This was in the era just before Spanish trials bikes were available and years before the Japanese companies became serious about either sport.

Bill Grapevine had been organizing local events for a dozen years, first in California, then in Mexico, Kansas and elsewhere. In 1965, 66 and 67 he organized a National Championship Trial that was held in Sedan, Kansas and attracted riders from throughout the Midwest. Since the American Motorcycle Association wasn't very interested, Bill sanc-

tioned the events through the F.I.M. in Europe. In 1967 Bill won, becoming an early National Champion.

AZTEC PARK, SEDAN INTER'L MOTOCROSS

Mr. Grapevine was interested in more than just trials. So in 1966 when Torsten Hallman, the Motocross World Champion from Sweden, toured the U.S. on a Husqvarna and beat everyone, Bill noticed. In 1967 both Husqvarna and CZ planned to send three-man factory teams to tour the States. Far sighted Bill knew this would be a great opportunity to host an International Motocross, so organized an F.I.M. sanctioned event at Sedan, Kansas in November 1967. The course wound through Aztec park, 100 acres of partially wooded, rolling hill country, including a rocky stream bed, where Bill organized many motocross and trials events in the 1960's. Nearly a thousand spectators witnessed Torsten Hallman battle another World Champion, Joel Robert of Belgium on a CZ. Those two champions, plus future World Champion Roger DeCoster of Belgium and British Champion Dave Bickers, both on CZ's, and two more factory Swedes on Husqvarnas completely dominated the best American riders including Preston Petty from California and Glen Vincent from Connecticut. I saw the spectacle and how stunned the local riders were at the amazing speed of the Europeans. The 1967 CZ and Husqvarna factory teams created the shock that woke up America to the excitement and speed of world-class motocross racing. Historically, Bill's Sedan International became one of the very earliest international motocrosses ever held in

this country.

CARABELLA

The excitement of the 1967 Sedan International fired Bill up about designing a larger and faster motocrosser than the lightweight Maverick. Rather than try to build cycles one at a time in Wichita, Bill contacted the Carabella factory in Mexico. They indicated that they would be interested in building bikes for him, so he and Charlie Hill moved to Mexico City. They worked inside Carabella, Bill doing the designing, and Charlie, a machinist, helping build the prototypes. When the two prototypes were finished and working satisfactorily, Bill and Charlie took them to California to demonstrate to prospective dealers and take orders. Upon returning to the factory, the guards wouldn't let them inside the gate. Carabella kept

Bill's blueprints, stole the design, and manufactured it. Although hundreds of bikes were sold, Bill and Charlie never received any payment.

GRM ISLO TRIALSMASTER

Around 1970, still dreaming of producing a bike of his own, Bill abandoned his motocross plans and focused strictly on trials. In spite of the fiasco with Carabella, Bill remained a trusting soul. Since old "number one", his first trials bike, had worked well with an Islo engine, he approached Moto Islo in Saltillo, Mexico. Islo, whose chief motorcycle engineer was British, agreed to build his bikes. So Bill created Grapevine Racing Motors, commonly called GRM, and continued work on trials prototypes.

Because retooling for a completely new design is so expensive, the bike had to use as many existing Islo components as possible. The factory agreed to bore out their 175 to 215cc and to cast narrower side cases. Bill designed a single down-tube frame and a sleek, fiberglass, gas tank and seat unit. He specified thin wall 4130 tubing, high quality Betor forks and shocks, and a 24mm Mikuni carburetor.

In the end, the GRM Islo Trialsmaster was a compromise. Because of the standard gearing, a giant rear sprocket was needed and the factory changed the frame to cheaper and heavier tubing. Inferior brake linings, a fiberglass skid pan and a weak kickstart lever were shortcomings. However, over 1,000 GRM Trialsmasters were built between 1972 and 74. Just to have that many motorcycles of his own design produced was a remarkable achievement for Bill.

JERRY YOUNG, MARTY GUIDE, CARL PETERS AND BILL BLUE

I became involved with GRM, visited Moto Islo

with Bill and Charlie, and received one of the first 25 units. Taking it to a local trial at the Candytown Motorcycle Club near Hershey, Pennsylvania in September '72, I met the local champion, Jerry Young. He tried the bike, promptly riding it over some car-sized boulders. After telling Bill, Jerry became a sponsored rider and rode the GRM in the 1973 Father's Day Trial in Michigan, the '73 Ute Cup in Colorado, and the '74 and '75 World Rounds in California and Rhode Island as well as numerous local events.

1973 was an exciting and optimistic year for GRM. Improvements were being generated "in the field" and promptly shared with Bill. Jerry lightened the bike by drilling holes in the aluminum head and side covers plus the cast iron cylinder fins. He achieved quicker bottom end response by installing a Sammy Miller modified carburetor.

Marty Guide of Scranton, Pennsylvania made a rugged skid pan out of 1/4 inch aluminum safety plate and either he or Jerry discovered that Triumph Cub linings were the correct diameter and improved the braking. In addition to selling eleven GRM's, Marty relocated the front mount and tilted the motor up for more ground clearance. Carl Peters in upstate New York was sponsored for a few months and machined a large brass sleeve for the magneto flywheel. I discovered that a banjo shaped X-Ducer silencer worked well and that the Ossa Stiletto kickstart lever fit the splines and was longer and stronger than the Islo lever. Bill Blue of Wichita made some large steel flywheels that fit behind the primary sprocket. I believe he discovered that 750cc three-cylinder Saab automobile pistons fit the Islo wrist pin, allowing the engine to be bored to 250cc.

Unfortunately the GRM's weren't as competitive as the Spanish brands and didn't have the quality or extensive dealer network of the Japanese. Trying to establish an independent brand is difficult under the best of circumstances, and after 1974, GRM faded from lack of sales. But for Bill and everyone else connected with GRM, it was an exciting ride while it lasted. And those involved can certainly be proud of what was accomplished.

BICYCLES, RYAN

In the mid 80's Bill wrote me, all excited about trials bicycling. He had built an aluminum trials bicycle which he called the Maverick. It had 26 inch wheels, Sturmey Archer drum brakes, a motorcycle style triple clamp with rigid forks, and a front sprocket assembly that was raised up into the seat tube. Because the raised crank brought both chain runs above the frame,

thereby protecting them as well as the sprocket, Bill applied for a patent. His application was rejected by the U.S. Patent Office.

Bill sponsored Ryan Young on a 26 inch front by 24 inch rear wheel Maverick in the 1987 National Championship in Durango, Colorado. He, and Ryan's older brother Mike, supported their rider, even pushing him between some of the sections to help save his energy. At the end of the day Ryan placed second to the reigning National Champion, Kevin Norton of California. Notably, it was the first bicycle trial Ryan had ever entered.

CANCER, FARRANDSVILLE

The autumn of 1988 ended with Bill, at 57, undergoing extensive surgery and radiation treatment when a large throat cancer was removed. As a result, some chest muscles were relocated to support his head; a breathing aperture was opened into his windpipe, a steel plate placed in his jaw, and he lost all his teeth. Bill never swallowed food or liquid again, feeding himself by a small tube into his abdomen. His lengthy recovery was aided by the dedicated help of family and friends.

Around 1990, Bill's daughter Gina and her husband Dennis brought Bill and a Maverick to Farrandsville, Pennsylvania for a triple trial weekend. The Dirty Dabbers club was hosting an NATC National Trial, a vintage motorcycle trial and a national bicycle trial. I was there to compete in the vintage and bicycle events. As it happened, Jerry Young wanted to show me something by the stream. Along the way he paused by the tailgate of a pickup, and a faint voice said "Hi Jim". I looked over, rather puzzled, as the thin old man spoke softly again, "Remember me?" After a long staring moment I suddenly realized it was Bill Grapevine. In the three years since he had come to Maine, he had shrunk from 180 pounds to 140, and apparently aged about 20 years. It certainly was good to see him again.

Bill was just recovering from pneumonia but started the vintage trial anyway. Dennis ran beside him, ready to help if need be. Bill was excited and pleased to be riding a motorcycle again. The next day he wanted to watch the National Trial, so we started walking. It took most of the day, but Bill was determined to complete the 7 mile loop, and did. I think he was testing himself after his battle with cancer. He certainly impressed me.

PASTMASTERS VINTAGE TRIAL

In 1992 the old fire and enthusiasm were evident as Bill started planning events again. He had found an ideal place for a vintage trial at the Rocky Ridge Resort in Fredonia, Kansas, about 50 miles southeast of Leon. There were plenty of rocky stream beds, exposed ledges and cedar covered, rock infested, hillsides. Cabins could be rented. A swimming pool, RV campsites and a fine restaurant topped it off.

Later that year the first Pastmasters Vintage Trial took place.

Over the years the Pastmasters underwent a major evolution as Bill kept trying new ideas and different formats. One year it included an AHRMA vintage trial and motocross. For several years a modern trial was added. At times Ryan Young put on demonstrations over old cars. And each year Greg Wells and other volunteers cleared more and more sections as Bill gained access to some dramatic neighboring property.

Bill went first class. Each year he produced a 20 or 24 page Program as well as a brief 'rule book' defining his format, classes and his special categories for additional awards. Bill would buy silver plated serving sets and use the tray, plus the sugar bowl and cream pitcher, mounted by Greg Wells on oak or walnut bases, as trophies. He had Pastmasters medallions cast as well as a different T-shirt each year.

Two days of riding through an ever increasing number of lengthy, old fashioned, single-line sections, plus the chance to visit Bill and other old friends was the real attraction of the Pastmasters events. In 1998 Bill invited former World Champion Mick Andrews of England and his wife Jill. They liked it so well they returned each year, with Mick teaching a trials school the day before the event. Ryan Young and Curt Comer, both former U.S. Champions, competed several times. Many of the 50 to 70 entrants returned year after year, some from as far away as Pennsylvania, New Mexico, and California. It developed into an informal reunion, and Bill loved it.

In 2000 we rode two loops of 53 different sections on Saturday. Then a reverse loop on Sunday with most of the sections also reversed, for a total of 159 rides. Because of the large number of sections, Bill used peer scoring. Over the years this allowed some classic and fierce competition, such as assigning Mick Andrews, Curt Comer and Ryan Young to the same group.

The final Pastmasters, in 2001, had 75 different, fully ribboned sections. Each class rode one loop of about 50 designated sections on Saturday. On Sunday, most of those 50 sections plus the loop were reversed. After 2001 the new owner of Rocky Ridge was no longer interested and the dramatic neighboring property also became unavailable. For the ten years it lasted, Bill's Pastmasters Trial was absolutely wonderful and unique, a classic event in every regard.

RIGID MAVERICKS, BROKEN NECK

Back in 1995 the increasing interest in vintage trials led Bill to consider reviving the Maverick. He called me. "Would you like to buy a Maverick replica?" "Yes." "With or without a swingarm?" "Without." I knew it would be different, lighter, easier to build, and more historic since the first Maverick in 63 was also a

rigid. Equipped with a 125 Hodaka Wombat motor, I had Bob Ginder of Tennessee make a two pound brass sleeve for the flywheel. I used the "Hummingbird" for both vintage and modern events for six years and thoroughly enjoyed its nimble and lightweight handling. All told, Bill and Larry Bowers built about seven rigid Maverick replicas, all on the original jigs from the early 60's.

For a man who had already faced a major medical crisis, 1996 was another bad year. In July, about a month after the Pastmasters Trial, Bill was testing a Russian motor from an RTX trialer in one of his Mavericks. He was riding in the woods near the river at Rocky Ridge when he hit a beaver stump and crashed. The fall broke his neck and paralyzed all his limbs. Bill guessed he lay there helpless for about four hours, afraid he might be crushed by cattle or eaten alive by animals that night.

Then, thinking he heard a truck or tractor, Bill made what little sound he could. At that very moment some women drifted by in a canoe, heard his strange noise, stopped and found him. I believe that discovery was more than just a coincidence. Some greater spirit, perhaps religious or native American, may have been helping our friend. Both of Bill's grandmothers had native-American ancestry.

Bill's spinal cord was not severed and he gradually regained use of his legs and one arm. He had a separated shoulder above his weak arm which his doctor didn't want to reset. On New Year's Day, nearly six months after the crash, a determined man shoved his bad shoulder into the wall and reset it. The arm then started to recover and Bill started planning the next Pastmasters.

In the late 90's Bill made several single downtube rigid bikes with Bultaco and Ossa engines. Knowing how much fun Jerry Young had with his old Triumph Tiger Cub, John French and I commissioned Bill to design and build a pair of rigid Maverick frames for Cub engines. John designed a wild looking aluminum gas tank and oil tank, and finished his lovely beast in time to ride it in the 2001 Pastmasters, a sight and sound Bill really enjoyed.

MOVE TO WICHITA, HALL OF FAME

I visited Bill in Leon in late November and again in mid-December 2002 on my way to and from my brother's home in Colorado. That year Bill had partially restored the chassis of one of the first four 1972 GRM Iso Trialsmasters and offered it to me. It was his last motorcycle project and I was honored to be the recipient.

Later in December Gina moved Bill to a house next to hers in Wichita. He was getting weaker, had ceased driving and needed help. Eventually Bill started receiving weekly visits from a social worker, a home health care nurse, and a lady chaplain who enjoyed taking

him places, such as visiting his home in Leon or to the American Indian Museum.

At the North American Trials Council's annual meeting in late October 2003, Bill was chosen as one of the first five inductees into the newly created NATC Trials Hall of Fame. To be chosen by one's peers is a significant honor. It's the kind of recognition Bill has long deserved.

In early November 2003 Bill's health suddenly deteriorated. His cancer had returned and he was moved into an acute care center, the Harry Hines Memorial Hospice. With his pleasant and uncomplaining nature and good sense of humor, Bill was well liked by the staff and was receiving plenty of care and attention when I visited him on November 24th.

He had heard about the Hall of Fame and wanted to know more. I explained its virtual nature, meaning it will be on the web and accessible to anyone worldwide. He liked that approach. I had been asked to write a summary of Bill's accomplishments, so we went over what I had written, line by line, and he made several corrections. Several years ago I took a photo of Bill talking to Mick Andrews, and recently submitted it for the Hall of Fame. Bill seemed amazed and honored by his selection, and I'm very glad this occurred while he was able to appreciate it.

Although I have focused on his motorcycling, because that is the record I know best, Bill was a lot more than that. His gentle and generous nature, the stories he wrote and illustrated for Gina as a child, his cartoons and whimsical drawings, an affection for nature and wildlife, the wild rabbits he fed by hand, his love of family and grandchildren, his marriages and the daughters he reconnected with in recent years, his care for his brother Bob, the various jobs he heldthese are all parts of Bill's character that others know far better than I.

I consider myself fortunate to have known Bill Grapevine for 37 years. It was a pleasure to work on some of his projects and to help with many of his events. For the past few years I called him every two weeks or so, to talk about numerous topics, usually getting around to trials at some point.

To me, Bill was a special character, a rare talent with a creative vision, someone with skills and insights I could appreciate and learn from. I couldn't help but admire Bill's grace and strength as he persevered through major difficulties, seldom complaining, setting quite an example. Finally, I cared about him deeply and valued his friendship. Although he will be missed, he left us quite a legacy. Thank you Bill.

Bill Grapevine died peacefully on Christmas eve, December 24, 2003. He was 72. Jerry Young and I both had the honor of speaking at his Funeral, December 30th in Wichita. Off-road motorcycling, particularly Observed trials, has lost a legendary figure. ■