Linda, Mike, Rick, Dave...Bill was our little brother. He was the youngest of five. Even in the 1950s when someone said that she had 5 children, eyebrows were raised, but as Bill used to say, Mom, no one would ever hear HIM complaining. I think the label “little” got attached to Bill very early, because he was. But I think that we who were not “little” persisted in using that label, sometimes so that he would remember that he was, and we were not.

There were many times when the three not-little boys did not want Bill to play with us. After all, he was...little. Somehow, Dad, we were able to convince you that it made sense that Bill’s first baseball glove was a catcher’s mitt, so that he could be permanent catcher while we took turns pitching and batting. And when we declared the driveway to be Stuntz Field for games of whiffle ball, we declared Bill too little...until Dad the Commissioner intervened and threatened to shut down the league.

He was a remarkable combination of, among other things, ambition and humility, a rare combination. When he was quite young, before kindergarten, he started filling notebooks with lists. Presidents, Vice Presidents, Supreme Court Chief Justices (now really, what young child makes a list of Supreme Court Chief Justices?) – and then he turned to baseball. More lists ensued: season batting average leaders, home run leaders, stolen base leaders. If you looked carefully at those baseball lists, you would notice every so often the name “Bill Stuntz” appearing, typically finishing a humble second to Rogers Hornsby or Ted Williams. But not ALWAYS finishing second.

From elementary school, Bill knew that he was different, that he was “smarter” than almost anyone. But he also somehow knew that such giftedness could be used to hurt another, to taunt, to crow. He therefore cultivated, throughout his life, a remarkable, gentle humility and affirmation of others. And, most likely before he ever heard the phrase “To whom much is given, much is required”, he understood its truth and took it to heart. And so his intellect was enriched into wisdom.

We shared a 9x9 bedroom – I had the top bunk, Bill had the bottom. Over the dozen years in that room, Bill’s flawed immune system was exceedingly clear: I was never sick, while he caught every bug in Annapolis. I missed 1 day of school due to illness, while Bill averaged 30 per year. Before finishing high school, there were a couple hospitalizations, and a major back surgery, followed in adulthood by more back surgeries, leading to a decade of unbearable – yet borne – pain, and ultimately the grinding ravages of life-ending cancer.

It would be easy to cast Bill, with the combination of his talent and his sufferings, as a heroic figure, such as the Romantic composers did with Mozart and his short life, or Beethoven with his deafness. It would also be easy to think in the way demonstrated by the Pharisees, when they brought a man born blind before Jesus and asked, “Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be blind?” Both would be wrong. Bill’s pain and cancer did not make him heroic – as he often said, he was the same person, only sicker. And his suffering is not evidence of a God of cruelty – as Jesus said to those Pharisees, “Neither sinned; this was done that the glory of God might be revealed in his life.” Which is precisely what was done for that blind man, and precisely what was done for and through Bill.
Bill fell in love two times: once, with Ruth Council, and once with Jesus Christ. The love he & Ruth shared created a loving home for Sarah, Sam, and Andy. And his love for Christ – and Christ’s love for him – made him, as was said about the future King David, “a man after God’s own heart.”

Bill touched many, many lives, more from his "gentle weakness", which became full-fledged woundedness, than from his intellect. Raw intellect is like "purity" or precision in music: It impresses, it might persuade, but it does not touch the soul. In music, that comes from passion, from first being pierced by that which you are hoping to perform piercingly. Bill's "weakness" was in fact his greatest strength: because he knew weakness so well, and knew intimately the presence and comfort of a Savior who suffered, he could bring comfort, even strength, to the "walking wounded" around him. He did not need to promote himself – I’m guessing that no one here can recall Bill ever saying, “Look at ME!” His life, in word and deed, was lived pointing to Christ. Since he knew that he was loved by God fiercely and tenderly, he could look to the needs of others, and as Paul says in Philippians, he could consider others as more important than himself. In an era of ever-coarsening discourse, Bill could bathe others and their ideas with three of his favorite words, “sweet”, “nice” and “lovely”. He understood the whole truth of Isaiah 53, “by Christ’s wounds we are healed.” And in Bill’s wounded wholeness, his full-of-gratitude heart spoke gently, clearly, and winsomely.

Some time ago, Bill latched onto a verse in the book of Job. In the midst of his sufferings, Job contemplates the end of his days and says, “You, O Lord, will call and I will answer you; you will long for the creature your hands have made. Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin” (14:15-16). I’ll let Bill speak to us about this verse – this is what he said: “Notice how memory and longing are fused. Job longs to be free of his many pains, which occupy his mind like a sea of unwanted memories. God longs for relationship with Job, and Job knows it: hence, his belief that the Lord of the universe remembers each of his steps. God is the Lover who will not rest until His arms enfold the beloved. To Job, the curses Satan has sent his way are a mighty mountain that cannot be climbed, an enemy army that cannot be beaten. In the shadow of God's love, those curses are at once puny and powerless...Philosophers and scientists and law professors are not in the best position to understand the Christian story. Musicians and painters and writers of fiction are much better situated – because the Christian story is a story, not a theory or an argument, and definitely not a moral or legal code. Our faith is, to use C. S. Lewis's apt words, the myth that became fact. Our faith is a painting so captivating that you cannot take your eyes off it. Our faith is a love song so achingly beautiful that you weep each time you hear it. At the center of that true myth, that painting, that song, stands a God who does vastly more than remember his image in us. He pursues us as lovers pursue one another. It sounds too good to be true, and yet it is true.” Endquote.

At the end of his days, Job’s final words were, “Oh Lord, I had heard of You with my ears, but now I have seen You with my eyes.” And so has Bill. The Lord’s longing for Bill, and Bill’s for Him, has been completely fulfilled. Bill knows the full truth of Paul’s words from Corinthians, “Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” Bill ran the race, and finished well. Thanks be to God for His grace and goodness, and for the gift of the boy in the bottom bunk, our really big brother.