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## *William Terry "Bill" Valentine Jr*



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William Terry “Bill” Valentine, Jr., 82, of Little Rock, died on April 26, 2015. He was born on November 21, 1932, the only child of William Valentine, Sr. and Margaret Kremer Valentine.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his wife of 38 years, Mary Ellouise Pefferly. Bill is survived by his wife of 24 years, Nena Rose Hays Valentine.

Shortly before his death, Bill told his friends, “I haven’t just had a good life. I’ve had a dream life.” He grew up in Little Rock, blocks away from what was then called Traveler Field and later became Ray Winder Field. As a boy, Bill worked at any available job at the ballpark including selling concessions and chasing foul balls. At 14 he began umpiring games for local amateur and semi-professional teams in the area.

Arkansas State Teachers College in Conway offered Bill a journalism scholarship when he graduated from North Little Rock High School in 1950, but he turned it down to travel to Daytona Beach, Florida, to attend a training school for professional baseball umpires. At 18, he became the youngest umpire in professional baseball history.

Bill spent 18 years as an umpire in various professional leagues, culminating with five years in the American League. He holds the distinction as one of the only two umpires who ever threw Mickey Mantle out of a ballgame.

During baseball’s off-season and after his American League career, Bill refereed college basketball in the Southwest, Missouri Valley, and Gulf Coast conferences. He also served as radio play-by-play announcer for Travelers games and was assistant executive director of the Arkansas Republican Party.

From 1976 to 2009, Bill was general manager of the Arkansas Travelers Baseball team. Attendance had waned at the aging ballpark in the early 70s, but Bill initiated creative offerings to bring families back to what he called “the greatest show on dirt.”

His sometimes outlandish but highly successful promotions included Clunker Car Night and appearances by the San Diego Chicken and Captain Dynamite. Attendance at Traveler games grew from 67,000 in 1975 to 223,000 in 1980.

Career honors include more awards than can be listed here. Highlights were induction into both the Arkansas Sports Hall of Fame and the Texas League Hall of Fame. The National Association of Minor League Baseball Teams named Bill Executive of the Year in 1976, 1977, 1978, 1988, 1999, and 2007 as well as proclaiming him “The King of Baseball” in December of 2014. Bill also proudly displayed a plaque he received in 1989 from the North Little Rock Boys Club naming him to their Alumni Hall of Fame.

Negotiating the team’s affiliation change from the St. Louis Cardinals to the Anaheim Angels, as well as joining in the endeavor to create a new home for the Travelers in North Little Rock at Dickey Stephens Park, Bill was an integral part of the Travelers’ history. In March of 2009, he announced his retirement to fans at a game in the newly completed park.

Bill chronicled his baseball career in *When In Doubt, Call Them Out*, a book he co-wrote with Democrat-Gazette sports writer Jim Bailly.

Bill’s “dream life” included his enjoyment of good food and wine, extensive travel all over the world, and his many friends who will remember his generosity, his

sense of humor and his passion for living life to the fullest.

The family would like to express sincere appreciation to Dr. Rodney Davis and Dr. Nathan Littlejohn both of UAMS. Pallbearers are John Evans, Pete Laven, Greg Crawford, Rhys Branman, Tom Kayser, Jerry Wells, and Michael Gowen. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Centennial Bank c/o Toby Anthony, 4924 Kavanaugh Blvd., Little Rock, AR 72207.

A visitation will be held Wednesday April 29, 2015 from 5 to 7 p.m. at Ruebel Funeral Home.

A memorial service will be held on Thursday April 30, 2015 at 10 a.m. in Dickey-Stephens Park, 400 W Broadway St, North Little Rock AR 72114. Arrangements are under the direction of Ruebel Funeral Home, [www.ruebelfuneralhome.com](http://www.ruebelfuneralhome.com)

### *Condolence Book*

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"Bill was one of a kind. Enjoyed visiting with him at his restaurant. Nena, so sorry for your loss."

**Doris Valentine-Young** | North Little Rock, AR | [youngdoris211@sbcglobal.net](mailto:youngdoris211@sbcglobal.net)

"Am Bill's cousin..I am 83 and will miss his smiling Valentine face..we shared the same family from West Va..His grandfather and my grandfathers were brothers.. We shared a family reunion in Beebe a few years ago and he attended..was good to have met him after all these years.

My best to the family. Some day when the family members want to go on a journey visit the Magnus-Dunkard cemetery in Austin and see all the Valentin's family there.

Love to you all

Emmitt Taylor

"

**Emmitt J Taylor** | Sacramento , CA | [ejtay35@hotmail.com](mailto:ejtay35@hotmail.com)

"Bill Valentine made Travs baseball fun! I always enjoyed seeing him at Ray Winder Field, and definitely loved attending the Hot Stove receptions at the beginning of the seasons. He was a fantastic GM, and things have not been the same since his retirement. We baseball fans were truly blessed by his life!"

**Zachary P. Muncy** | Searcy, AR | [zpmuncy@gmail.com](mailto:zpmuncy@gmail.com)

"Dear Nena and family, Dr. and I are so sorry to hear of Bill's passing. You all are in our prayers. May the Peace of Christ be with you during this sad time.

Michael Upson and Jim Aukstulis, MD

"

**Michael Upson** | Little Rock, AR | [mupson@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mupson@sbcglobal.net)

"Nena, It's difficult to believe that Bill is gone. I hold dear the memories of my time working with/under Mr. V. at Ray Winder. You have my deepest sympathy, for the world has lost a man unlike any other. "

**Treva Young Wells** | Arp, TX | [tyapary@hotmail.com](mailto:tyapary@hotmail.com)

"Nena, so sorry to hear about Bill. He will be missed by everyone who ever knew him. You are in my thoughts and prayers."

**Barbara White** | Little Rock, AR | [barbarawhite558@yahoo.com](mailto:barbarawhite558@yahoo.com)

"Bill Valentine is responsible for me having enjoyed many, many, many nights of entertainment at the ballpark. I've always said that Ray Winder Field was my "Home Away from Home" during my time spent in Little Rock. I can not begin to thank him enough for what he did to keep Baseball alive and exciting in his home town. I wonder who will be the first one thrown out of the game in his new Ballpark!!!!!"

**Ronny Clay** | Pensacola, FL |

"Oh, how fortunate to have known of Bill Valentine and his efforts to make The Arkansas Travelers accessible to families. We and our children have such fond memories of hot summer nights at Ray Winder Field. May Bill rest in peace eternally."

**Hank and Becky Hartman** | Harrison, AR, AR |

"Nena-Will keep you in our thoughts and prayers. When Bill took over the Travelers in 1976, we were already friends from umpiring, refereeing, etc. He had no assistant. We talked and I agreed to help him on game nights, because I was running a family business. I remember once when Bill was at St. Vincent's Hospital for some checkups, and he could see the field from his room. About 10 minutes after the game I got a call from him wanting to know why the lights were still on. He said it was too expensive to run the lights and quoted me the price per minute. We later laughed about that. Had a good relationship with him and will miss him."

**Nick Avants** | Little Rock, AR | bruise1@aol.com

"We had many fun times together over the years, sharing good food, wonderful wines and great stories. Will very much miss Bill and his ineffable personality. He was one of a kind. So here's to good times, good friends and good memories. "

**Dennis Cossey** | Little Rock, AR |

"Bill was best known for his outstanding role in both Major and Minor League baseball. However, I am one of several who can tell you he played a very important role in laying a good foundation (at a very crucial time)for the future successes of the Republican Party in Arkansas. It was an honor to work with him and enjoy his friendship. A special salute to a good friend and mentor.

Jim Caldwell"

**Jim Caldwell** | Tulsa, Oklahoma | senatorjim13@yahoo.com

"Nena, I'm so glad I was able to visit with Bill at St. Vincent. Also, I had a delightful visit with him at the Sports Hall of Fame dinner, where he was introduced as one of the members. He was a fine gentleman and will be greatly missed. You are in my prayers.

"

**Garth Martin** | Little Rock, AR | garth@aristotle.net

"Nena you are in my thoughts and prayers I have so many great memories of baseball games at Ray Winder Field with me my Mom Dad and Brothers.so big of an impression on a young boy I got to see Fernando valenzuela pitch,the St.Louis Cardinals vs.the Kansas City Royals,the San Diego Chicken, captian dynamiter,and Leon spinks.all of this made possible by Mr.Valentine. Thanks for the memories Mr. Valentine &#9918; "

**Kevin L Harris** | Sherwood,AR, AR | kevinlharris66@gmail.com

"Nena,

I am so sorry for your loss. As you know, Bill was a one-of-a-kind, larger than life

character who will be greatly missed by the baseball world. He was a mentor to me in many ways from his ballpark cleanliness, souvenirs and promotions to how to drink and learn about wines. I will miss him and his stories greatly. Know that he is in a better place with no more pain and suffering. Leigh and I will be praying for your peace at this difficult time. Chuck"

**Chuck Lamson** | Tulsa, OK | [Chucklamson@me.com](mailto:Chucklamson@me.com)

"Dear Nena:

Linda and I were very sorry to hear about Bill's death. We will always remember the excellent evening we spent with you, Bill, and a few other teachers from Jacksonville High School.

Bill was such an excellent host and regaled the group with interesting and amusing stories. He was also excellent at choosing the food and wine pairings for an outstanding meal.

I will always remember Bill as the energetic and amusing fund raiser for AETN.

You will be in our thoughts in these difficult times."

**Bill Wood** | North Little Rock, AR | [wood5252@att.net](mailto:wood5252@att.net)

"Bill Valentine was an extraordinary person and an outstanding influence in my life. He officiated many of my basketball games at Hall High and UALR. Ejected me from a game at UALR which I deserved and that he reminded me of everytime we were together. Guess that puts me equal to Mickey Mantle! The last evening we were together was a wonderful evening at the Arkansas Sports Hall of Fame this past February 27 where we shared a dinner table together. Have a great picture of us together. I will remember him best in his seat on the 1st base line at Ray Winder Field. He was a special man that I will always have fond memories. May God rest his soul in that beautiful ball park in heaven and give his family comfort and understanding. John 3:16. "

**Richard Green** | Hot Springs, AR | [angcms4@att.net](mailto:angcms4@att.net)

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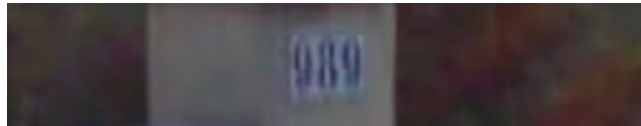
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