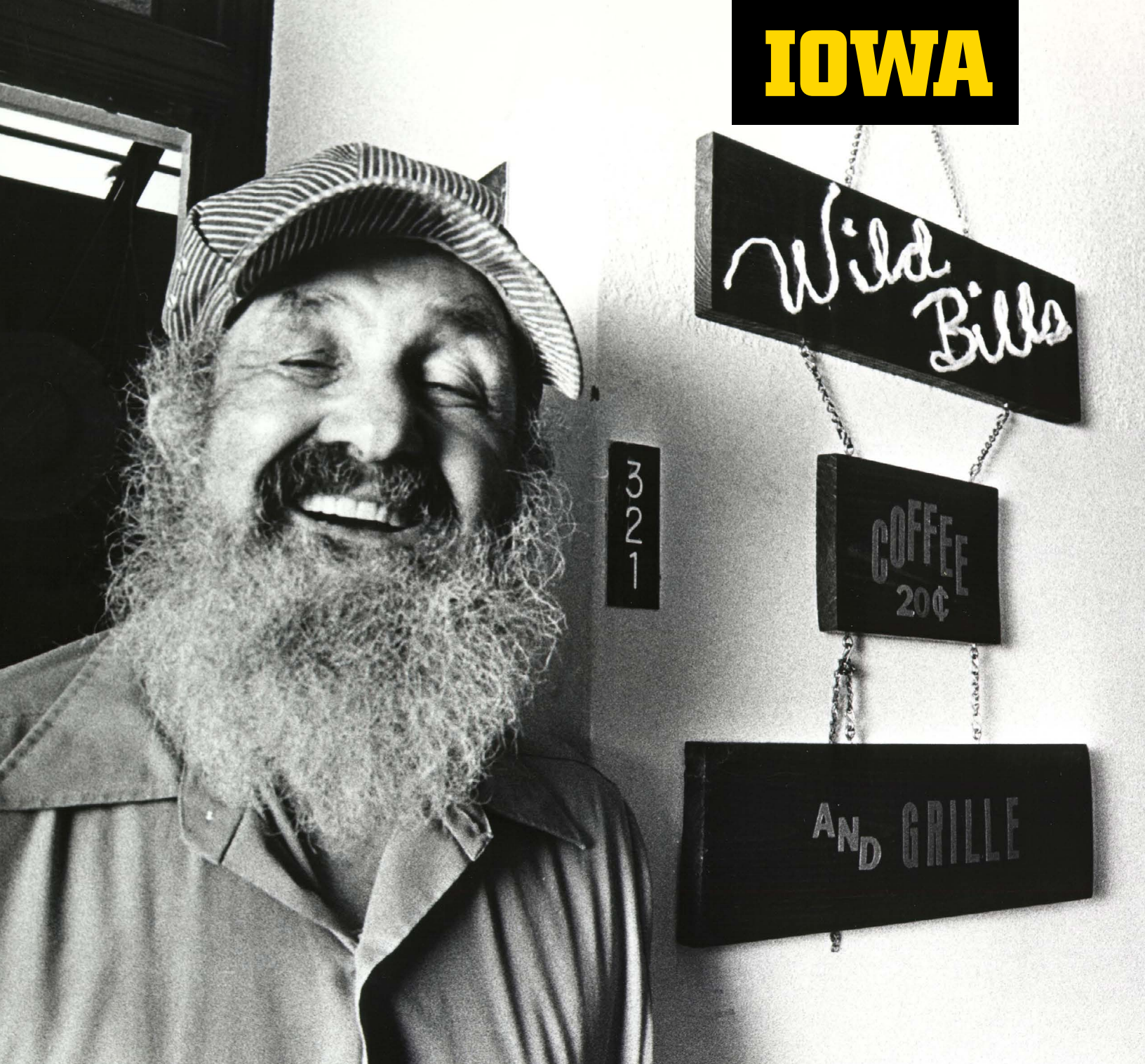


IOWA



Hey Buddy, I'm Bill

August 21 – December 19, 2023
Main Library Gallery

BILL

Hey buddy, I'm Jen.

How do you begin to tell someone's life story? How do you do that using the objects their life left behind? What objects would tell your life story? Could you do justice to the life story of a person you never met?

These are questions I've grappled with while curating this exhibit. I never knew if I'd be able to do a good enough job, since Bill Sackter was such a beloved, transformative person and cultural figure, and I only came to know his story many years after his death. I knew of Wild Bill's Coffee Shop as an undergrad at Iowa many years ago, but wasn't really familiar with Bill's story until I became the manager of Wild Bill's in 2018 through my role as the marketing and community engagement specialist in the School of Social Work. Barry Morrow had held basically the same position (I think his title was multimedia specialist) more than 30 years before me. I got the job shortly after Tom Walz died, but his name still rang through North Hall as a self-described "maverick professor" and creative leader. At that time, though Tom had retired and Bill had been gone for decades, I was overseeing the employment of a dozen community members with disabilities who were still running the coffee shop and carrying on his legacy. What a powerful throughline!



When Wild Bill's Coffee Shop shifted to a different model in 2021 (due to COVID-19 and other reasons) and its cousin coffee shop Uptown Bill's closed, I knew we needed to preserve that legacy and tell his story for a whole new population of people who have joined our community without knowing who Bill was, or how much of a difference he made. That's why I proposed this exhibit.

Many of the items on display came from the School of Social Work. These items have been catalogued, preserved, and archived for future people who want to study Bill's life. There's also a Tom Walz collection in the University Archives, which was donated by his family in 2018. We reached out to Barry Morrow, who graciously donated personal items from Bill's life that helped tell the story, and whose wonderful stories make up the bulk of my knowledge of Bill's life. Barry connected us with Jack Doepke, another close friend of Bill's, who also contributed photos and stories.

Bill had so many buddies because he was a friend to everyone. It's astounding and inspiring that he had so much love to give after having been treated so poorly for so long. I hope that many of his friends will visit the exhibit and think we did a good job of representing the life of this extraordinary, complex man and the world in which he lived. For visitors who are getting to know Bill's story for the first time, I hope you leave feeling like a buddy.

There is so much more to his life than we could display in this one room—but we hope you enjoy the parts of the story that we are sharing. And, even more important, we hope you will also share your stories with us.

Thank you for getting to know Bill with us, and for helping us keep telling his story!

Jen Knights [she/her]

Marketing and Communications Manager

School of Music, Department of Theatre Arts, Department of Dance

Notes from the Curators



I take very little credit for curating this exhibit. Jen drafted and submitted the proposal for the exhibit and then asked me if I would like to be a part of it. I said yes, without hesitation. This was a tremendous opportunity because I—in fact, neither one of us—had curated an exhibit before. Jen, having worked at the School of Social Work, was more familiar with Bill’s story. I focused on the other parts of the exhibit: how Bill’s story would have happened if he had grown up in Iowa, and how disability and advocacy have changed and expanded over the years.

When Bill died in 1983, I was only 6 years old. I did not know about Bill Sackter while I was growing up in Indiana, nor had I seen the movie *Bill* on TV. When I arrived at the University of Iowa in 2010 to pursue a graduate degree from the School of Library and Information Science, I came across Wild Bill’s, a coffee shop in North Hall. I would occasionally visit the coffee shop while taking classes at the University of Iowa Center for the

Book and noticed the photographs of Bill on the wall.

I did not really get to know the story of Bill until after graduating, after having my stroke (shortly after graduation), and after I started working at the University of Iowa Libraries. I became involved in disability awareness and advocacy on campus and had a chance to see a screening of *A Friend Indeed* at Wild Bill’s, hosted by Jen. From that documentary, I began to understand the significance of Bill and the impact he had on those who knew him, and the impact that he still has today.

It is important to tell his story again. There are fewer and fewer people who know the story of Bill Sackter. This exhibit will hopefully introduce, or reintroduce, Bill to a community that he had—and still has—a tremendous influence on.

Brad Ferrier [he/him]

Digital Projects Librarian

Special Collections & Archives, University of Iowa Libraries

I had the occasion to meet Barry Morrow in 2013, when I worked at the University of Iowa Foundation (now the UI Center for Advancement). Along with our mutual friend Dick Blazek, who was my coworker at the time, we made a short video in Wild Bill’s to promote giving to support Wild Bill’s as part of the foundation’s giving week for staff. Who would’ve thought we’d end up here?

—Jen



THE ARC

19. Copy of a letter to Bill from Mickey Rooney. November 16, 1981. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.
20. Photo of 353 Lexington Avenue, Iowa City, c. 1957. Home of Dr. and Mrs. Nelson, where The Arc of Southeast Iowa was founded. Courtesy of the Johnson County Historical Society.

BILL AND THE ARC

21. Letter to Barry Morrow from Joseph A. Buonomo, National President for The Arc, 1982. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.
22. Self-Advocate of the Year Award from The Arc Iowa, 1982. On loan from the University of Iowa School of Social Work.
23. Itinerary for Bill's visit to Arizona, 1983. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.

NEW FRIENDS IN ARIZONA

24. Artwork made for Bill by Melissa "Missy" Hinz, early 1980s. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.

RECOGNITION

25. Handicapped Iowan of the Year Award, 1976. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.
26. Bill receiving the Handicapped Iowan of the Year Award, 1976. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.

BILL'S BAR MITZVAH

27. Yarmulke owned by Bill. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.
28. "Coming of age at 66: a most unforgettable bar mitzvah." Linda Kerber. *Moment Magazine*, May 1981. Courtesy of *Moment*.
29. Bill's bar mitzvah certificate, 1979. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.
30. "Bar mitzvah for Bill – at 66," by Gary W. Galluzzo. Clipping from *The Des Moines Register*, October 14, 1979. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.

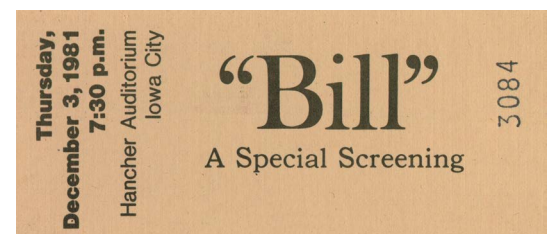


LITTLE BUDDIES

31. Selection of photographs: Bill spending time with friends, c. 1970s-80s. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.
32. Plate featuring drawings and writing by Bill Sackter. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.
33. "Bill's joy: Music and kids," by Mark F. Rohner. Clipping from the *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, April 21, 1977. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.

BILL AND BILL: ON HIS OWN

34. Letter to Bill Sackter from Mickey Rooney. February 25, 1982. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.
35. Telegram to Bill Sackter from executives at CBS Entertainment, December 1980. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.
36. Advertisement for broadcast of *Bill* on CBS after the Emmy Awards, 1982. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.
37. Hancher Auditorium admission ticket to *Bill: A Special Screening*, December 3, 1981. On loan from the University of Iowa School of Social Work.



Guide to Objects on Display

HARD TIMES

1. Copy of Bill Sackter's birth certificate. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections.
2. Mary Masnick Sackter (1886-1950), ca. 1915, facsimile. From *The Unlikely Celebrity: Bill Sackter's Triumph Over Disability* by Thomas Walz. Southern Illinois University Press, 1998.
3. Samuel Sackter (1885-1920). Undated, facsimile. Courtesy of Lane Wyrick.
4. "State School for Feeble Minded, Faribault, Minn." Postcard, 1910. On loan from Jen Knights.
5. Portrait of Bill Sackter at 7 years old, 1920. Courtesy of Lane Wyrick.

BILL THE INMATE

6. Photos from Faribault, Minnesota, undated. Courtesy of Lane Wyrick.
 - Inmates on a train to Faribault.
 - Main building: Faribault School for the Feeble-Minded and Epileptic.
 - Facility exterior at Faribault.
7. The only known image from Bill's many years institutionalized at Faribault State Hospital and School, c. 1938. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.
8. One of Bill's harmonicas. On loan from the University of Iowa School of Social Work.
9. Wig owned by Bill Sackter, 1970s. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.

BILL ON THE OUTSIDE

10. Bill in Minneapolis, early 1970s. Photos by Barry Morrow.

WORDS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

11. Forest C. Ensign, *The Care of the Insane in Iowa*. Reprinted from the Bulletin of Iowa State Institutions. Iowa City, 1900. On loan from the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.
12. Gershom H. Hill, M.D. *Prevention of Insanity*. Iowa State Medical Society, 1889. On loan from the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.
13. Marcel Heiman, M.D. *A Mental Hygiene Program for Iowa*. Reprinted from The Journal of the Iowa State Medical Society. New York, 1944. On loan from the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.
14. William M. Fuson, PhD. *The Fate of One Man in Twenty, or The Life of a Patient in an Iowa State Hospital for Mental Diseases, 1944-1945*. Dist. by the Coordinating Committee for Improving Iowa Institutions. On loan from the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.



IOWA'S ADA CONNECTION

15. News release: "Harkin's Americans with Disabilities Act Passes Senate." September 7, 1989. Facsimile. Tom Harkin Papers, Drake University Archives & Special Collections.
16. Letter to Tom Harkin from President George Bush, 1994. Facsimile. Tom Harkin Papers, Drake University Archives & Special Collections.

A LOCAL ADVOCATE

17. Elizabeth Riesz. *First Years of a Down's Syndrome Child*. Seattle: Special Child Publications, 1984. Elizabeth D. Riesz Papers [IWA1005], Iowa Women's Archives.
18. Elizabeth Riesz. *Let's Cook! Healthy Meals for Independent Living*. Mankato, MN: Appletree Press, Inc., 2010. Elizabeth D. Riesz Papers [IWA1005], Iowa Women's Archives.

57. Tom Walz's Uptown Bill's business card, undated. Tom Walz Papers [RG99.0344], University Archives.
58. Photograph of Tom Walz with a University of Iowa truck, ca. 1970s. Tom Walz Papers [RG99.0344], University Archives.



Credits

Exhibition Curation Jen Knights, Marketing and Communications Manager – School of Music, Department of Theatre Arts, Department of Dance; Brad Ferrier, Digital Projects Librarian, University of Iowa Libraries **Preparation & Conservation** Bill Voss, Conservator Technician & Exhibit Preparator; Giselle Simón, University Conservator **Design** Kalmia Strong, Creative Coordinator **Exhibition Coordination** Sara J. Pinkham, Exhibition and Engagement Coordinator **Installation** Bill Voss, Kalmia Strong, Sara J. Pinkham **Exhibition Technology** Will Brown, IT Consultant (LIB IT); Chris Clark, Senior IT Support Consultant (LIB IT) **Video Editing** Lane Wyrick **Digital Media Access** Mark Anderson, Digital Scholarship & Collections Librarian; Daniel Johnson, Digital Preservation Librarian **Website** Ken Clinkenbeard, Web Services Specialist; Sara J. Pinkham **Financial Support** Friends of the University of Iowa Libraries

Special Thanks to the following individuals and organizations for their contributions to the production of this exhibit: Barry and Beverly Morrow, who shared with us their wonderful collection of mementos and stories from the life and times of Bill Sackter; Lane Wyrick, who provided access to the media archive for his documentary, *A Friend Indeed: The Bill Sackter Story*, and who created a special edit of his documentary for this exhibit; Jack Doepke and Rabbi Jeff Portman for additional photos and stories about Bill; Kate Kemp and Wynne Worley from the UI School of Social Work for their above-and-beyond help with many aspects of preparation for the exhibit; University of Iowa Libraries: Special Collections & Archives: Peter Balestrieri, Sarah Keen, Lindsay Moen, Elizabeth Riordan, and Jenna Silver; Administration: Anne Bassett, Katie Buehner, John Culshaw, Natalee Dawson, Paul Soderdahl, and Paula Wiley; Collection Fulfillment: Kevin Storey; Mercedes Bern-Klug and Chuck Wieland, UI School of Social Work; Kristina Gordon and her Spring 2023 Introduction to Disability Studies students; Hang Nguyen, Allison Johnson, and Jodi Evans at the State Historical Society of Iowa – Iowa City Research Center; Hope Bibens, Drake University Archives & Special Collections; Rebecca Dewing, Johnson County Historical Society; Kate Dietrick, Upper Midwest Jewish Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries; Kim Painter, Johnson County Recorder; David Gould, Sara Sanders, Josh Weiner, Ben Hill, Dick Blazek, David McCartney, Linda Kerber, David Dierks, Nikki Grim, Liz Crooks, Tricia Bender and Stefanie Kohn, Bob Howe and Carolyn Howe, and Mike Hoenig for additional assistance and support; UI Council on Disability Awareness; UI Students with Disabilities Advocacy & Awareness (UISDAA); Staff at the Center for Disabilities and Development; Minnesota Historical Society

THE IMPACT OF *BILL*

38. Invitation to the Emmy Awards, 1982. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.
39. Series of picture postcards featuring Bill Sackter, Barry Morrow, and Bev Morrow before the Golden Globe Awards presentation, 1982. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.
40. Barry Morrow's Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing in a Limited Series or a Special, 1982. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.
41. "For your consideration" ad for *Bill* in *The Hollywood Reporter*, 1982. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.

BILL SACKTER, "CLINICAL OPTIMIST"

42. Bill Sackter's travel bag. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.
43. A harmonica case and harmonica belonging to Bill Sackter. On loan from the University of Iowa School of Social Work.
44. Photograph of Bill playing the harmonica by Barry Morrow.
45. Bill's "lucky \$2 bill." On loan from the University of Iowa School of Social Work.
46. Stack of Bill's business cards, 1970s-80s. On loan from the University of Iowa School of Social Work.

IN THE FRONT WINDOW

Bill's overalls, Hawaiian shirt, and engineer's cap. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.

Social Development Issues: Alternative Approaches to Meeting Human Needs. Vol. 1, No. 2. Fall 1977. Iowa City: University of Iowa School of Social Work Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.

Young & Old, Family Focus 2 calendar, 1984. Department of Family Practice, College of Medicine, University of Iowa. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.

47. Straw hat and portrait of Bill wearing a straw hat. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.
48. Spiral notebook featuring Bill's handwriting. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.
49. Iowa City Transit bus routes, 1979. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.
50. Instruction cards for Iowa City bus drivers. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.
51. June 1983 Iowa City Transit pass. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.
52. Custom 10-gallon hat and framed photograph of Bill Sackter with Mickey Rooney, Barry Morrow, Helen Hunt, and other cast and crew members of *Bill: On His Own*, ca. 1982-83. On loan from the University of Iowa School of Social Work.

A FRIEND INDEED

53. Theatrical poster for *A Friend Indeed: The Bill Sackter Story*, 2008. William "Bill" Sackter Papers [msc1028], Special Collections & Archives.

TOM WALZ AND UPTOWN BILL'S

54. Painting of Uptown Bill's, undated. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.
55. Uptown Bill's canvas artwork, undated. Courtesy of Barry & Bev Morrow.
56. "'Spirit of Bill' lives on," by Colleen Krantz. Clipping from *The Des Moines Register*, April 7, 2003. Tom Walz Papers [RG99.0344], University Archives.



Scan the QR code for exhibit extras:

Listen to Bill play his harmonica.

Hear Bill sing a song with his friend Jack Doepke.

Watch the full-length documentary, *A Friend Indeed: The Bill Sackter Story*.

Find an interview with Tom Walz in which he talks about his friendship with Bill.

Listen to a recording of Barry Morrow's eulogy for Bill.

Transcriptions are available for audio files with spoken words and closed captioning is available for the documentary.



Tell Your Story

We couldn't possibly tell the whole story of disability in this exhibit. We could barely begin to tell one man's life story!

That's why we invite you to tell your story.

Whether you have a memory of Bill that you'd love to share, or a story of your own lived experience with disability, we want to hear it.

Scan the QR code to share your story.

