

Bill Walton was unique in media and life, with a message that everyone understood

By ANDREW MARCHAND

The Atlantic

They are all the same, even though Bill Walton was one of the most unique men to ever live. Walton was a 6-foot-11 redhead, curiosity seeker, Grateful Dead fan and TV analyst, who just happened to be one of the greatest basketball players to ever live.

But upon his death Monday, the tributes were all the same because the thread of Walton's life was his tie-dyed passion for people. At times, he might have seemed as if he lived on another planet, but he wanted you and everybody else to join him on it because it was a place where love and dreams come true.

That is why the tributes were all the same on social media, summed up succinctly by the legendary Julius Erving.

"Bill Walton enjoyed life in every way," Erving said in a statement posted to X.

But you didn't need to be a fellow Hall of

Famer like Dr. J to know Walton. For decades, Walton has been a part of basketball fans' lives as a TV commentator.

As a center, Walton reached the highest heights leading UCLA and the Portland Trail Blazers to championships before being a sixth man — "Larry Bird's valet," as Walton put it — on the Boston Celtics and thriving as a role player for another ring. His importance on the floor changed, but his attitude did not.

As a broadcaster, he had that same ride, teaming up with fellow NBC analyst Steve Jones and Tom Hammond on top crews.

In 2002, Walton worked the NBA Finals with Marv Albert for NBC. In 2003, on ABC, he was paired with play-by-play Brad Nessler and co-analyst Tom Tolbert for the Finals.

However, these aren't the broadcasts that will live on in our memories of Walton. It was when Walton was more of a sixth man that he stood out to a greater degree; especially in the social media age.

His work on ESPN, late night on his beloved Pac-12, teaming with Dave Pasch or Jason Benetti really represented the groovy Walton experience.

That is why, upon his passing, social media played clips of Walton being Walton, comparing the San Antonio Spurs' Boris Diaw to Beethoven or eating a lit cupcake or talking about actual Bears and Huskies when describing UCLA going out to an early lead on Washington.

Benetti took to social media to share an email he received from Walton four years ago:

"PUT THE MUSIC ON, as soon as it doesn't seem right, change the music/station, but don't turn it off"

In 1981, Walton did his version of changing the music. That year, he addressed a stuttering problem that had plagued his life and makes his accomplishment as a broadcaster even more impressive.

Until Walton was almost 30, he was afraid

to speak. At that time, Walton met the legendary broadcaster and Olympian Marty Glickman. Glickman advised Walton that talking was a skill, not a talent, and he could apply the lessons of the court to improve, basically to keep it simple and practice.

"When I was 28, a chance encounter at a social event with Hall of Fame broadcaster Marty Glickman completely changed my life in so many ways that things have never been the same since, nor have they ever been better," Walton wrote in an essay for The Stuttering Foundation.

Basketball fans were better for it. Most people alive now did not see Walton play in his prime, but they have listened to his views on life. It was authentic, on or off the TV.

"Bill would often end text messages with 'Thank you for my life. Shine on. Peace and love,'" ESPN president of content, Burke Magnus, said on X.

That was his message. Everyone got it. For all of his accomplishments, what a great legacy.

Handyman Hub
Home Repairs and Remodeling

**Drywall -
Painting - Tile -
Trim - Doors -
Decks - Fence -
Bath Remodel -
Much More...**

**Call Today for a
Free Estimate
801-662-0073**

**AUDIOLOGY AND HEARING AIDS
HEARING ZONE**

**TRUSTED FOR
20+ YEARS!**

Best Value and Benefit:

- Doctor of Audiology
- Experienced Staff
- Walk-In Today: Service, Repair, Molds, Batteries
- Latest Technology
- No Charge Trial

**801-713-0101
5642 S 900 E SLC
Life...Sounding
Its Best!**

**Alan Young Au. D.
No Interest!**

Remote appointments may be available

**NEED TO
PLACE A
LEGAL
NOTICE?**

**EMAIL:
legals@sltrib.com**



**Grab Bar
Specialist**

801-810-7024
Utahans
Insured

**How long
are you
going to
wait?**

Call Today!

Celebrations
Book yours today!

- Weddings
- Engagements
- Birthdays
- Graduations
- Anniversaries
- Retirements

**Email:
celebrations@sltrib.com**

**Inherit a property and
must sell?**

I am a real estate Broker with 40 years of experience in helping heirs and attorneys sell homes, condos, land and commercial properties of those who have passed in Salt Lake, Davis, Utah, Summit, Wasatch and Washington County. I have a great team of vendors to help clean out the property and get it ready to sell. Call or text anytime for a consult and appraisal. urbanutah.com

Babs De Lay, Broker

801-201-8524

**To Place an Obituary in
The Salt Lake
Tribune**

**Call: 801-237-2990
Email: obits@sltrib.com**

**Sun. Print Deadline:
Friday by 10 AM**

**Wed. Print Deadline:
Monday by 10 AM**

**E-Edition Deadline:
2 Business days before
publication by 3 PM**

AFFORDABLE

**Complete
Spring Clean-Up**

**Flower Beds,
Pruning, Trimming,
Shrubs, Weeding,
Raking, Tree Service
and Hauling.**

Free Estimate

801-595-1012

**HIRING?
WE'VE GOT YOU.**

Email legals@sltrib.com
to place your
recruitment ad today!