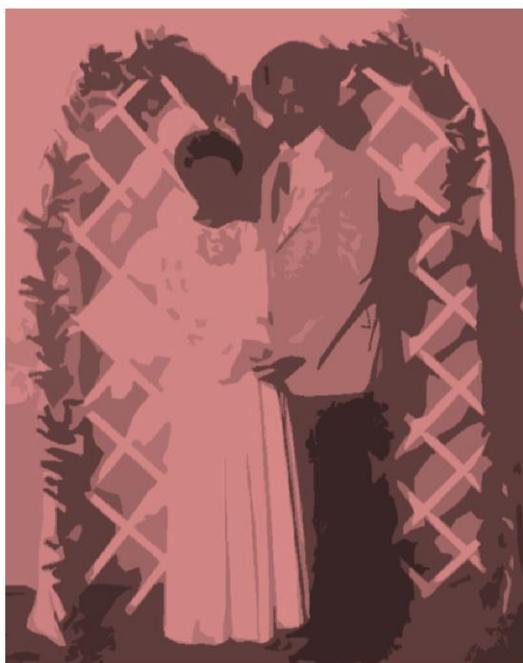


## *Who Is Bill Jolly?*

*If you visit his website you will read his copious catalog of achievements, accolades and activities that have earned him respect in the music industry not just around the country, but around the world. Rightly so, he is one of Philadelphia's favorite sons, and any performer that comes through town worth their salt requests his talents as music director, composer, arranger, keyboard player or all of the above. So peruse it on your own time but reserve a day or two; you'll need it. I want to talk about Bill Jolly the person and what he means to me. Since I've known him for forty-five years I believe this is something I just may be qualified for.*

*As with most girls who happened to cross paths with young Bill, he started out being my schoolgirl crush when I was eleven years old. I'm surprised they didn't have to repave the entire route between our neighborhoods, with my girlfriend and me just "happening to be passing by" so often. But what set "Billy" apart from other popular boys was that he wasn't a jerk. If he knew what the deal was, he never let on. He would just look up from playing basketball with his brother, say hello and then get back to trying to steal the ball. If I was lucky and his mother was on the porch, I might get invited in for a cold drink or a snack before I made the half-hour trek back home to my side of the tracks.*



*After that awkward period subsided (I'm sure much to his relief) we got down to the business of being music camp associates, school mates, band and orchestra pals, and friends. We became so familiar that by my senior year, he returned to our school to take me to my prom because he knew I had spent my teens trying to blend in with the wallpaper. This was not about romance. It was about being a really good friend whose character and decency had already started to evolve due to his upstanding parents.*

*This night and one involving him about 25 years later were two of the best nights of my life, and both were about one friend helping another. We lost touch and I moved out of state but when I returned it was easy to reconnect. Nowadays, all grown up, I live down the street from that house that gave me a major workout getting to, although I just “happened to be passing by.”*

*Now that the backstory's complete, let's move on to his work ethic. Bill Jolly is not just a name, but a brand. He's a business that strives for excellence. And just like any other business, as an employee you do what you're told because you represent the company. If not, you'll get a look and be put in a virtual time out. However because he believes in second (and third and fourth) chances, it will feel as though the duration will be in some form exponentially equivalent with your age, like on the show “Supernanny.” (By my calculations I'll be allowed to work for him again sometime next year.)*



*Delegation for him is a challenge so one must be proactive and anticipate needs. Be prepared to be as invisible as possible while sliding that bottle of water and hand towel across the stage, or making a sandwich appear next to him during a rehearsal. Don't look for validation. Why brag about doing your job and risk getting the aforementioned look? Bill has literally started careers in his basement*

*studio; people whose names are well-known because of his selfless assistance with no expectations. Also, don't expect to hear from him for a while after a major gig. He'll either be regrouping with the phone on mute or unwinding on a beach somewhere.*





*Working for Bill isn't without perks. Being an assistant allows for hearing great music. There are gigs to boast of, opportunities for selfies, or you may find yourself backstage standing next to a musical legend.*

*There is pride from watching him work, and joy in seeing a fan elated by having a request delivered to Bill and getting a shout-out. But that's not why I risk skinned knees trying to get just the right photo of him and his dad at a dedication ceremony, or run down Broad Street with his tux in one hand and his shoes in the other.*

*I do it because he is my family. My big brother. My mentor. My What Would Bill Do. ("Wait a day and a half to make a decision." "Do what's screaming the loudest." "Don't ask a question if you don't want the answer." "Keep it movin'.")*

*Because when I'm going off the rails he's the only one that can calm me down or tell me to snap out of it. Because he'll tell an off-color joke when he knows I'm close to tears. Because he thinks my gifts of a star in the heavens named after his mother and a perpetual rotating globe are geeky but sweet. And because if I need to get in my house, my car needs a jump, need muscle, or a ride to the hospital, he'll be there for me in a heartbeat.*

*That's who Bill Jolly is to me.*

*-Kathryn Jones*

