
The Authors

William L. "Bill" McGee

Montana Years (1925-1941)

Bill McGee was born September 30, 1925 in Livingston, Montana, and grew up on ranches in Park and Phillips counties. As a teen, he felt wanderlust and rode the rails throughout the West, working odd jobs as a cowboy. One of his favorite memories was while breaking colts in the Coachella Valley, California, where he met and rode with General George S. Patton.

Bluejacket Years (1942-1946)

In spring of '42, like so many eager and patriotic youths, McGee joined the Kaiser Shipyard in Vancouver, Washington where he worked as a welder on Liberty ships.



In October 1942, at the age of 17, McGee enlisted in the regular Navy, agreeing to serve until he was 21. These minority enlistments were called "kid's cruises." He attended boot camp in Farragut, Idaho; took gunnery training in San Diego, California; and was assigned to the Naval Armed Guard, the branch of the U.S. Navy that protected merchant marine ships and their valuable cargo and crews from enemy attacks and sabotage.

Between 18 March 1943 and 28 November 1945, McGee served in the Pacific Theater in three Liberty ships (*SS Nathaniel Currier*, *SS David Belasco*, *SS Thomas Nelson*) and one Victory ship (*SS Yugoslavia Victory*). He participated in the Pacific campaigns to take back the Solomon Islands, New Guinea, and the Marshall, Mariana and Philippine islands. After the war, he served in the *USS Fall River (CA-131)* while she was the Target Fleet flagship for Operation Crossroads, the Bikini atomic bomb tests in the Marshall Islands.

(Pictured: Bill McGee on leave, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1943.)

On 20 August 1946, McGee was discharged from the Separation Center in Shoemaker, California, with the rank of Gunner's Mate Second Class. He earned medals for Asiatic Pacific Area Campaign (5 stars), American Area, Victory, and Philippine Liberation, and the Chief Bureau of Naval Personnel Commendation for Enemy Air Action off Guadalcanal on 16 June 1943.

Cowboyin' Years (1947-1950)

After the war, McGee enrolled at Montana State College on the G. I. Bill with thoughts of becoming a veterinarian. However, wanderlust was still with him and, after a year, he left college to take a job as a horse wrangler in Yellowstone National Park. There he had a flare-up of the malaria he'd contracted in the South Pacific during the war. He hitchhiked to Reno, Nevada and checked into the new Veterans Hospital for treatment. Released from the hospital, he started looking for work.

In summer of 1947, he hired on at Lake Tahoe as a trail and deer hunting guide. In fall of '47, a chance conversation at Reno's Round Up Bar, the unofficial hiring hall for cowboys, landed him the job of head dude wrangler on the Flying M E, an exclusive dude ranch 21 miles south of Reno that catered to wealthy divorce seekers—mostly Eastern socialites and Hollywood celebrities. To a young and good-looking cowboy, surrounded by so many wealthy and attractive women at the ranch, McGee thought he'd "died and gone to heaven."



(Pictured: Bill McGee on the Flying M E dude-divorce ranch, Washoe Valley, Nevada, 1947.)

First Taste for Radio

In January 1949, during one of Reno's severest snow storms, McGee was helping a neighboring rancher round up his straying cattle. In the deep snow, McGee's horse somersaulted on him. McGee suffered a serious back injury and was ordered to recuperate in Reno where the doctor could check on him daily. Several weeks later, and wearing a back brace, McGee took a job driving for Star Taxi. One of his fares, an insurance company executive, liked McGee's deep voice and asked him to audition for the company's commercials on Reno's KOH-AM radio. McGee was hired and became "John Friendly." He spun records, announced the births of new babies, and did the insurance company's commercials. After the show, "John Friendly" delivered free baby books to the new mothers.

At the Flying M E, McGee met many ranch guests from Hollywood and New York who worked in the entertainment field, including the new medium of television. They encouraged the young cowboy to try his luck in this field. However, one guest, radio actor/TV director Norman Tokar, commented, "Why would you ever want to leave here, Bill? Most men would give their right arm to have your job!"

In the spring of '49, McGee married ranch guest Joan Allison in Fallon, Nevada. Joan was staying at the Flying M E to get a divorce. Bill soon realized that being a dude wrangler among so many women wasn't the best job for a married man. In December '49, Bill left cowboyin' and headed East to Joan's hometown, Englewood, New Jersey.

Automobile Years (1950-1951)

In Englewood, New Jersey, McGee got a job selling Rocket Engine Oldsmobiles and found he had a talent for sales. The McGee's first daughter, Lucy, was born in Englewood.

Restaurant Years (1952-1953)

The McGees returned to the West and settled in Marin County, California. The family grew with the births of Elizabeth, William Allison and Katherine. McGee owned and operated the popular Ranch House restaurant in San Anselmo, a short-term investment while he looked for something more permanent.

World Trade Years (1953-1957)

McGee entered the world trade business in San Francisco, California where he developed a new import division for Thomas D. Stevenson & Sons. Later, he founded Ferrostaal Pacific Corporation which he sold to his German partners.

Broadcasting Years (1957-1990)

In 1957, McGee made a successful transition into the broadcasting field, his targeted career choice since leaving the Flying M E. He enjoyed a 32-year career during which he held various sales and management positions:

Independent Television Corporation ("ITC"), Los Angeles, Calif., division manager, 1958-62

NBC Radio, New York City, New York, spot sales representative, 1960

Peters Griffin Woodward ("PGW"), San Francisco, Calif., branch manager, 1962-67

KBHK-TV, Kaiser Broadcasting, San Francisco, Calif., general sales manager, 1967-69

KEMO-TV, U.S. Communications, San Francisco, Calif., general sales manager, 1969-1970

WATL-TV, U.S. Communications, Atlanta, Georgia, general manager, 1970-1971

At ITC, he licensed syndicated television programming to advertisers and TV stations from coast-to-coast, selling programs such as "Lassie," "Fury," "Four Just Men," "Cannonball," "Danger Man," "Best of the Post," "Our Miss Brooks," and "My Little Margie."

McGee helped pioneer major-market UHF independent TV with Kaiser Broadcasting and U.S. Communications.

In 1971, McGee launched Broadcast Marketing Company ("BMC") to provide affordable sales support and training services to radio and TV stations and, later, for cable systems. He would soon be regarded as a leader and innovator in retail sales and co-op advertising.

In 1975, he created and produced the first nationally syndicated, monthly co-op advertising information service, Broadcast CO-OPPORTUNITIES.

In 1976, McGee pioneered the use of the film medium to sell radio advertising with "Get It On! Get It On Radio Now!!" The film was licensed in 137 markets within one year.

McGee authored eleven books on broadcast advertising, retail advertising, broadcast advertising sales, and the new emerging electronic media:

Retail Sales Training & Development Program

- *Vol. 1, The Professional's Guide To Consultant Selling*
- *Vol. 2, A Marketing Approach to Building Store Traffic With Broadcast Advertising*
- *Vol. 3, A What, When and How Guide To Broadcast Co-op: The Untapped Goldmine*
- *Vol. 4, 1001 Creative Sales Ideas*
- *Vol. 5, A Primer on Broadcasting and the New Electronic Media*
- *Vol. 6, Management Guide & Sales Training Manual*

- *The Definitive Guide to Broadcast Co-op: STILL The Untapped Goldmine*
- *Changes, Challenges and Opportunities in THE NEW ELECTRONIC MEDIA*
- *Electronic Media Glossary*

In 1980, McGee produced "How To Make Effective Low-Cost Television Commercials," the first retail advertising seminar video presentation specifically designed to show retailers how to be more comfortable with commercial production. The presentation addressed the local advertiser's biggest concern: commercial copywriting and production. It was packed with proven "how-to" information from the experts; included brief excerpts from 50 award-winning retail commercials; demonstrated effective copy approaches, commercial formats, inexpensive production techniques; and, most importantly, showed how to maximize television investments for increased store traffic, sales and profits. The presentation is still available from BMC Publications on DVD and video cassette.



In 1984, McGee sold BMC's CO-OPPORTUNITIES service to Jefferson-Pilot Communications, Charlotte, North Carolina. (Pictured at left with John Edgerton of JPC.)

During his broadcasting career, McGee received numerous awards and honors including:

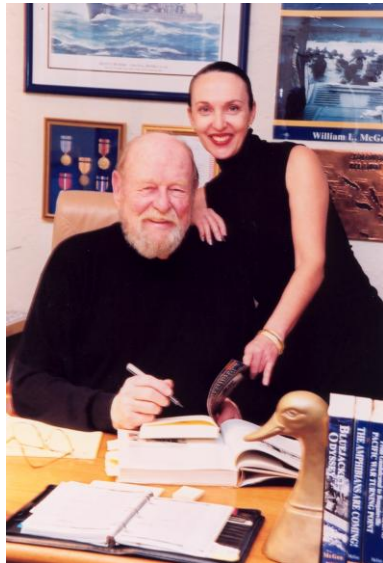
- PGW's "Television Colonel of 1964"
- Broadcast Pioneer's "Pioneer Award" in 1982
- Builders of Broadcasting, honored in 1986 for "vision, dedication and achievement in the field of broadcasting."

He is one of six charter members of the Cooperative Advertising Hall of Fame.

Historian Years (1990-present)

In 1990, McGee retired from broadcasting and turned his interest to research and writing. His World War II military histories have garnered praise from reviewers and readers alike. The *Library Journal* wrote, "...a thoroughgoing historical record and analysis that historians and scholars will find invaluable."

The *Marine Corps League* praised McGee's work with, "Enough gripping drama, heroism, and heartbreak in McGee's almost encyclopedic 'The Solomons Campaigns' to supply Hollywood with material for a century."



In 2000, McGee and his present wife, Sandra, formed a writing collaboration that produced *The Divorce Seekers: A Photo Memoir of a Nevada Dude Wrangler*; *Pacific Express*; and *Learning To Cope With Sight Loss: Six Weeks at a VA Blind Rehabilitation Center*.

Bill and Sandra have appeared on numerous radio and TV shows, and guest lectured aboard cruise ships and before historical and military groups.

Bill is a member of Broadcast Legends. Bill and Sandra are members of Western Writers of America.

In 2010, Bill McGee joined the newly-formed Admiralty Board of the National Liberty Ship Memorial in San Francisco. The Memorial manages the historic WWII Liberty ship, *SS Jeremiah O'Brien*, berthed at Pier 45 in San Francisco. (www.ssjeremiahobrien.org) Of the 2,710 Liberty ships that were constructed during World War II, only two survive today and are operational: *SS Jeremiah O'Brien* in San Francisco and *SS John W. Brown* in Baltimore, Maryland.

In 2011, Bill selected the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas, as the repository for his World War II research and writing files.

Books in print by William L. McGee and Sandra McGee

Amphibious Operations in the South Pacific in World War II, a Pacific war trilogy:

- Vol. I, *The Amphibians Are Coming! Emergence of the 'Gator Navy and its Revolutionary Land Craft* (2000)
- Vol. II, *The Solomons Campaigns, 1942-1943: From Guadalcanal to Bougainville, Pacific War Turning Point* (2002)
- Vol. III, *Pacific Express: The Critical Role of Military Logistics in World War II*, Editor with Sandra McGee, (2009)

- *Bluejacket Odyssey, 1942-1946: Guadalcanal to Bikini, Naval Armed Guard in the Pacific* (1997, 2000)
- *The Divorce Seekers: A Photo Memoir of a Nevada Dude Wrangler*, with Sandra McGee (2004)
- *Learning to Cope with Sight Loss: Six Weeks at a VA Blind Rehabilitation Center*, with Sandra McGee (2010)

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