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## The Authors

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### William L. "Bill" McGee

#### Montana Years (1925-1941)

Bill McGee was born September 30, 1925 in Livingston, Montana. He grew up on ranches in Park and Phillips counties in Montana, and cowboied throughout the West.

#### Bluejacket Years (1942-1946)



In October 1942, at the age of 17, and like so many eager and patriotic youths, 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 (*Nathaniel Currier*, *David Belasco* and *Thomas Nelson*) and one Victory ship (*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.

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 (1946-1950)

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 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."



**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 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.

When he returned to work on 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. Most of them encouraged the young cowboy to try his luck in the new field. However, radio actor/later TV director, Norman Tokar, commented, "Bill, why would you ever want to leave here? Most men would give their right arm to have your job!"

Fraternizing with the ranch guests was frowned upon by Emmy Wood, the ranch's owner. However, when Joan Allison arrived from the East for a divorce, things changed. Joan and Bill fell in love and were married in the spring of '49 in Fallon, NV.

#### **Automobile Years (1950-1951)**

In December 1949, realizing that being a dude wrangler wasn't the best job for a married man, Bill McGee left the Flying M E – and cowboyin' – with his new wife, Joan. They headed for Joan's hometown, 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 ("Betsy"), William Allison ("Billy"), 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 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. His next move would be to broadcasting, his targeted career choice since his Flying M E days.

#### **Broadcasting Years (1957-1990)**

In 1957, McGee made a successful transition into broadcasting and 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."

He 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.

In 1976, McGee wrote his first of nine books on broadcast advertising, retail advertising, broadcast advertising sales, and the new 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. Specifically, the presentation addresses the local advertiser's biggest concern: commercial copywriting and production. It is crammed with proven "how-to" information from the experts; includes brief excerpts from 50 award-winning retail commercials; demonstrates effective copy approaches, commercial formats, inexpensive production techniques; and, most important, how to maximize their television investments for increased store traffic, sales and profits. The presentation is currently available on DVD and video cassette.



In 1984, McGee signed an agreement with Jefferson-Pilot Communications, Charlotte, North Carolina, for the sale of BMC's CO-OPPORTUNITIES service (shown at left with John Edgerton of JPC). McGee then retired to Incline Village on the Nevada shores of Lake Tahoe.

During his broadcasting career, McGee received numerous awards and honors including PGW's "Television Colonel of 1964" and Broadcast Pioneer's "Pioneer Award" in 1982. In 1986, he was honored by the Builders of Broadcasting 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 his retirement years, McGee turned his interest to research and writing, producing books that have garnered critical praise from reviewers and readers.

The *Library Journal* praised McGee's Pacific war trilogy for "...a thoroughgoing historical record and analysis that historians and scholars will find invaluable." The Marine Corps League declared, "Enough gripping drama, heroism, and heartbreak in McGee's almost encyclopedic 'The Solomons Campaigns' to supply Hollywood with material for a century."



McGee and his present wife, Sandra, formed a writing collaboration which includes the celebrated *The Divorce Seekers: A Photo Memoir of a Nevada Dude Wrangler*, a collection of Bill's stories from the Flying M E years mixed with Nevada history of the era. The Nevada Historical Society praised *The Divorce Seekers* as "the best book yet about Nevada's dude-divorce ranch business."

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

Bill is a member of Broadcast Legends and Western Writers of America. He is currently working on a screenplay based on *The Divorce Seekers* and an autobiography.

Titles in print by William L. McGee include:

- 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)

## Sandra McGee

Sandra saw her first ballet at the age of three and began dancing that same year at the studio of Mlle. Zina Torchina in Burbank, California. Mlle. Torchina, a Russian ballerina who carried the title “prima ballerina” with the original Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, chose Sandra to be her protégé. At age five, Sandra made her professional debut at UCLA’s Royce Hall in the Chopin Centennial and performed the “Waltz” and “Nocturne” from Chopin’s “Les Sylphides.” A reviewer wrote, “little Alexandra Konecskova is a child genius destined for an artistic and creative future.”



At the University of California, Berkeley, Sandra studied piano with the esteemed Bernhard Abramowitsch, performed with local chamber music groups, and earned the Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Music.

However, at age 25, believing a performing career on the stage was not her destiny, Sandra made the difficult decision to give up piano and ballet. A chance meeting led to an opportunity to refurbish and lease a 1906 office building in San Francisco’s Financial District. This led to a career in commercial real estate. Sandra designed, leased and managed office space both for a large corporation and later for her own company. She found this work to be creative. She also found she had a talent for business.

After her father’s unexpected death in 1983, Sandra visited a psychic in the Hollywood Hills. The psychic told her, “In your later years, you will be a writer.” Sandra found this hard to believe as she took only the required English course in college.

In 1986, Sandra married Bill McGee and the psychic’s prediction began to come true. It started with typing her husband’s manuscripts and then making some careful editing suggestions.

In 1994, she was one of six co-founders of the professional State Street Ballet in Santa Barbara, California. She volunteered to serve as the Company’s publicist, writing press releases, program notes, and other marketing materials. She also belonged to the Women’s Auxiliary of the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara and did publicity for the Auxiliary’s fundraising events.

In 2001, Sandra and Bill collaborated on their first book, *The Divorce Seekers: A Photo Memoir of a Nevada Dude Wrangler* (2004). This was followed by *Pacific Express: The Critical Role of Military Logistics in World War II* (2009) and *Learning to Cope with Sight Loss: Six Weeks at a VA Blind Rehabilitation Center* (2010).

Today Sandra McGee is Vice President/ Director of Marketing for BMC Publications, an imprint of BMC Communications. She is a member of Western Writers of America. Sandra is currently working on a screenplay based on *The Divorce Seekers* and a semi-biographical story of her husband’s life growing up in the American West during the Great Depression.

Sandra has always kept ballet a part of her life ever since seeing her first performance. Today she appreciates the art from the audience as a patron of the San Francisco Ballet and other major companies.