

COWBOY BILL MARTIN: GETTING THE LAST LAUGH

Cowboy Bill Martin's journey to comic stardom has been rife with hardships, which he has overcome to become one of the hottest acts on the comedy club circuit. Performing along side some of the industry's biggest country recording artists, including George Strait, LeAnn Rimes, Jo Dee Messina, Asleep at the Wheel and Collin Raye, Martin is widely recognized as an emerging talent on the comedy circuit.

But life wasn't always so rosy for Cowboy Bill. Growing up as the youngest of four children in Saginaw, Texas, he was not the typical class clown. In fact, he was painfully shy, thin and smart – not a popular combination. "The only person who really thought I was funny was my brother Skeeter, and with a name like that, you've got to have a sense of humor," recalls Martin.

Because of troubles he and his father were having, he left home at age 17 to live with his oldest brother. Like many headstrong teenagers, he felt he knew more than his father, so he moved out to prove himself.

An avid drummer, he attended the University of Texas in Arlington on a music scholarship, but ran out of money his freshman year and soon dropped out. In less than a year, he got married and attempted to settle down. Within the next year, he and his wife had a newborn son. This responsibility made Bill realize that he wanted more out of life for his family, so he decided to return to college more focused and determined. But the grueling schedule of full-time work and full-time college took its toll on the newly married couple, who divorced after six years of marriage.

Armed with an English degree, Bill wrote advertising copy for nine "miserable" years, until the firm where he worked was bought out. A victim of down-sizing, Bill called everyone he knew to let them know he was looking for work. "The only one who really talked to me about my fate was my grandmother. She told me that writing seemed to make me happy, and that I needed to figure out how to make it work."

So, after much self-scrutiny, Bill decided that all he ever really wanted to do in life was be on stage, television and print. He called his grandmother and she encouraged him to pursue his dream. Still full of doubt, he said, "What if I lose the house?" She said, "Buy you another! Don't go through life wondering what coulda, woulda, shoulda been." This was advice from a woman who had just learned that she was dying of lung cancer.

Taking that advice to heart, Bill pursued his dream, but not everyone in his family was equally supportive. "I remember calling my momma when I decided become a comedian and heard her whisper to my dad, 'He wants to be a comedian. I

don't think he's funny.'" Soon after, she became his biggest fan until her untimely death several years ago.

Since his first comedic performance in 1996, Bill has never looked back. "Because I'm living my dream, I have gained peace within myself."

Bill has been through the pain and laughter of growing up and growing older, getting married and divorced, having a son and being a father, and losing his mother and his grandmother, which have all helped mold him into the performer he is today, which is a national touring headlining comic who is on the rise.

For the record, yes, he did lose his house *and* truck in the beginning of his career, but they've both been replaced, thanks to the perseverance of a man pursuing his dream.