

## Why read a book?

### Graduate's experiences answer that question

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Bill is the man in the striped shirt in front of the bull.

After **Bill Hillmann, Class of '99**, graduated from St. Joe's he went to College of DuPage for one year. There he had a professor in literature who spoke admirably about Ernest Hemingway. The following year, immediately before he took his first class at Elmhurst College, Bill was intrigued by Hemingway and he read *The Sun Also Rises*, about a group of American and British free-spirits who travel from France to Spain to witness the running of the bulls at Pamplona. Where did this lead?

First, Bill began to reconsider his major in physics. Instead he chose English and set his sights on writing. To that end, Bill founded the Windy City Story Slam, a competition whereby five-to-seven writers share a personal story within a five-minute period with a winner selected by the audience. "The idea grew out of my experience with Poetry Slam, a great program founded by Marc Smith. It's held at Green Mill, an old Al Capone speakeasy where men and women share original poetry. The story slam has taken off tremendously to the point that there is city-to-city competition. Last year Chicago sent a group to London where it was victorious. "I am thrilled to say my wife, Enid, took a first place." Bill's efforts continued in promoting Story Slam by having Chicago sponsor the first National Story Slam in Printers' Row in 2011. "I had about \$200 to make this happen and through the Internet I was able to put up ten people from around the country in some pretty good hotels. It was awesome."

Second, the reading of *The Sun Also Rises* inspired Bill to try another venture, an adventure actually. "I've become obsessed with the running of the bulls. During the fiesta in Pamplona they run the bulls eight mornings in a row. Over six years I've run 43 times. I'll hit 50 this summer." Bill shared his interest in this extraordinary experience by publishing an article for *Outside Magazine Online*, focusing on the most dangerous moments in the past ten years at Pamplona. (<http://www.outsideonline.com/adventure-travel/europe/spain/The-Bloody-and-the-Brave.html>). [Bill is the young man in the black and blue shirt ahead of the bull].

Before Bill developed his passion for writing and running from the bulls, he enjoyed success as a boxer. "When I was playing football at St. Joe's, an alum, Dennis Hughes, talked me into trying boxing. I got hooked up with Brother Peter, who trained me in his hard-nosed old-school style and before long I competed. Later I got invited to represent Chicago on the International Boxing Traveling Team. I was selected three times. We went overseas twice. It was great. I competed in the Chicago Golden Gloves three times and won the Novice Division once." Bill's interest in boxing carried over into his writing as well (<http://www.fightnews.com/Boxing/joe-frazier-passes-101130>)

Chicago Tribune named Bill a Remarkable Person in its Sunday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, issue for his numerous accomplishments, which includes the completion of his first novel, which is now on the desk of a potential publisher. "Writing is such an exhilarating experience. I was lucky enough to meet and become good friends with Irvine Welsh (author of *Trainspotting*). He's helped me tremendously with my writing." Bill's novel is also serving as his thesis for the completion of his Master's Degree in Fiction Writing from Columbia College Chicago.

One book opened many doors for Bill, who continues to pursue free-lance writing for various newspapers and magazines and he has already begun brainstorming his second major opus, a reflection on his experiences in Spain – and that's no bull!

**Congratulations and good luck, Bill!**