

## I remember Bill Binder



**ROGER GUSTAFSON**  
Internet historian

### Rembrandt flyer was killed only one month into service in Vietnam

**C**apt. Calvin William Binder II, a Rembrandt native, was killed in action in a helicopter crash in Cambodia in 1970. The loss hit his family and the entire town of Rembrandt hard. It also hit his classmate from the class of 1965 Roger Gustafson. He posted this online:

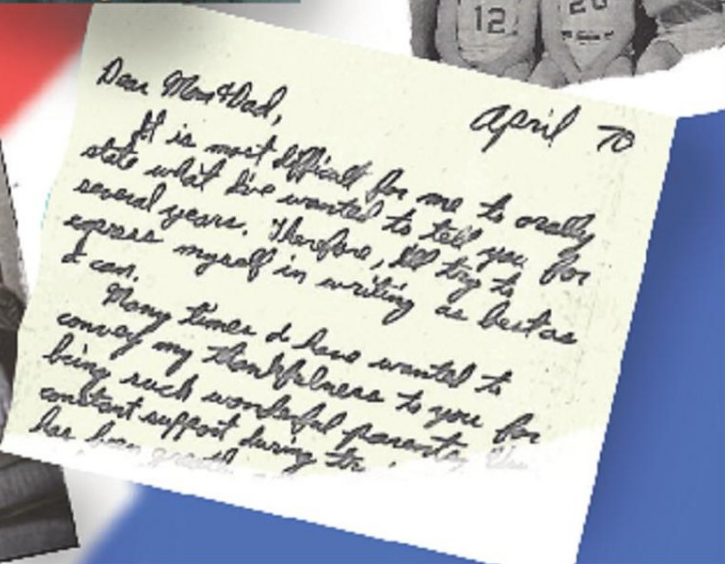
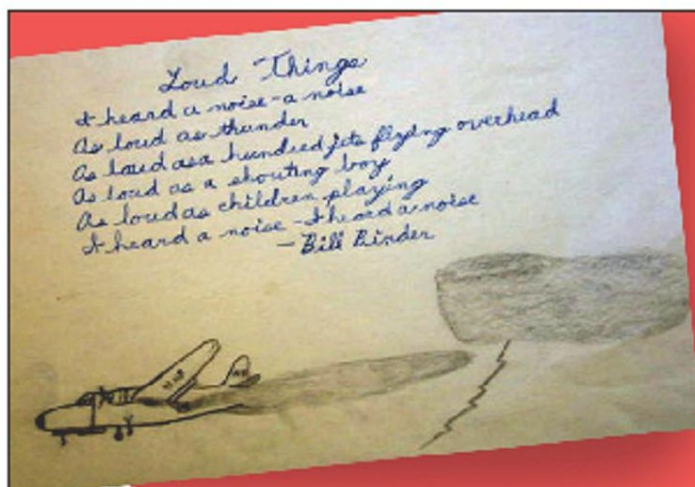
"A very few people are ongoing companions with my inner being. Bill is one of those persons who has remained a model for my life. He is a person whose principle and values I often try to mirror when making choices. His mortal life was far too short, but his ongoing presence far outlives the typical. Bill is truly one of God's special creations. He lives in paradise."

Roger lives in Chaska, Minn. He is a sort of historian, posting all things Rembrandt to the site rembrandtschool.com. Combing through newspapers, collecting photos, programs and memorabilia, it's like a scrapbook.

The reality that this classmate with the blond crew cut wouldn't get to live out his adult life wouldn't have occurred to them as they sat together for umpteen school pictures. Roger stresses that everyone loved Bill. Not just him.

Although Bill entered the service in 1966, he reenlisted in 1969, completing flight school training and helicopter flight school. He departed for Vietnam May 27, 1970, but it was only one month later, on June 29, when his helicopter was shot down.

Roger directed us to other sites with references to Bill. At [facesonthewall.com](http://facesonthewall.com) there's a poem written by Bill in sixth grade. Then there's the letter he wrote his parents before he left for Vietnam. Here's a shortened version



**Capt. Calvin Binder was a helicopter pilot in the Army. His parents Calvin and Freda Binder are in their 90s. Binder's classmate Roger Gustafson guided us towards the above images of Bill on Internet sites. Clockwise from upper left: Bill dreamed of flying and wrote this poem while he was in the sixth grade. The funeral at Lakeside Presbyterian Church in Storm Lake. Roger Gustafson often ended up next to his friend Bill in school pictures (Bill is on the left). The letter he wrote to his parents before heading to Vietnam. At home in Rembrandt, Christmas 1969. The two friends ended up together in this Freshman class picture too.**

Dear Mom & Dad,  
It is most difficult for me to orally state what I've wanted to tell you for several years. Many times I have wanted to convey my thankfulness to you for being such wonderful parents. These next few months may be very trying for you, but believe in our country's cause.

I have been looking forward to serving my country in RVN for some time. The primary reason for extending my active service was to help

other devoted American soldiers in RVN. Always remember that I am leaving for RVN willingly and am anxious to give my support. Never, please never, speak harshly against our actions.

Accidents will happen, lives will be lost, but we have a purpose and will succeed. Whatever I do, I like to do well, and I work doubly hard for something I believe in. I believe in our country's actions in RVN and am willing to defend them at all costs."

Other classmates remember Bill:

"There are no bad memories of Bill because Bill never created any. His positive attitude would shine through," recalls Mike Hadenfelt on the site. "I think of Bill, not everyday, but at times that are unexpected. And Memorial weekend is for remembering Bill and others like him who died while serving our country. Memorial Day means much more to me because of Bill."

"We went fishing together and slept overnight in my '57 Chevy at the Iowa Great Lakes near the end of school our senior year," wrote Dennis Sassman. "Bill loved people and treated everyone with respect and friendliness. When I grumble and complain, I often pause to reflect on how short his life was and again it makes me remember how much I have to be thankful for. His spirit lives on in many of us. I'm honored to have known Bill."