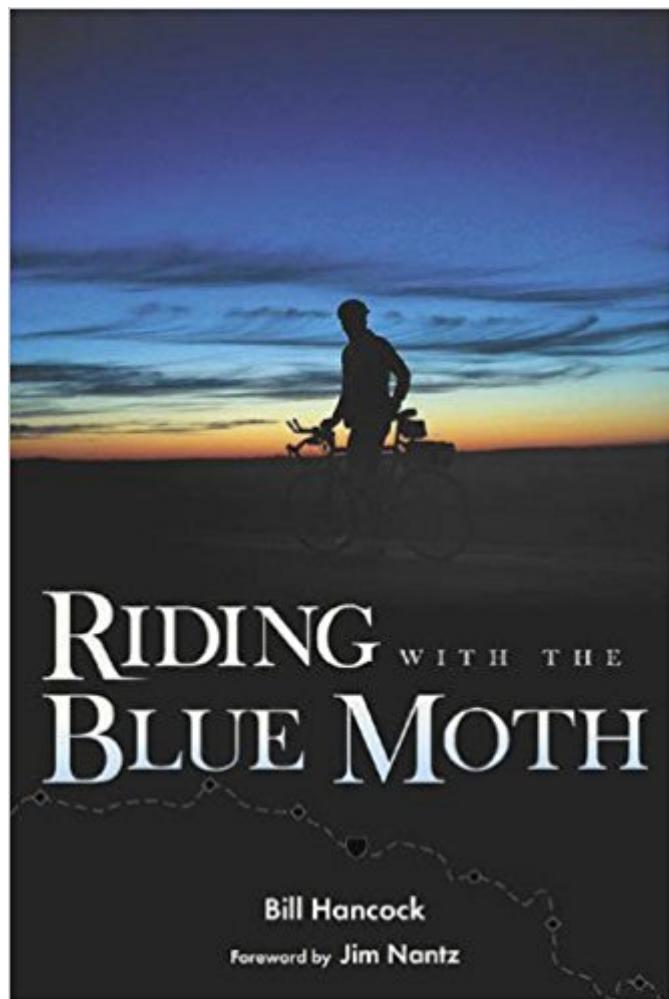


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# Riding With The Blue Moth



## Synopsis

After the death of his son, Will, in the 2001 airplane crash that took the lives of nine additional members of the Oklahoma State basketball team and support staff, survival became a common word in Bill Hancock's vocabulary. Bicycling was simply the method by which he chose to distract himself from his grief. But for Hancock, the 2,747-mile journey from the Pacific Coast to the Atlantic Coast became more than just a distraction. It became a pilgrimage, even if Hancock didn't realize it upon dipping his rear tire in the Pacific Ocean near Huntington Beach, California in the wee hours of a July morning. On his two-wheel trip, Hancock battled searing heat and humidity, curious dogs, unforgiving motorists and the occasional speed bump-usually a dead armadillo. Hancock's thoughts returned to common themes: memories of his son Will, the prospect of life without Will for him and his wife, and the blue moth of grief and depression. That pesky moth fluttered around Hancock as if he was a beaming lamp pole in an empty parking lot. Some suggested Hancock cope with medication; others suggested he get back to his job as director of the NCAA men's basketball tournament as soon as possible. But, Hancock found himself a glutton for his own punishment, unable to shake that blue moth from shadowing him on each step of his everyday routine. So, Hancock chose to battle the beast one-on-one, taking the moth on the ride of its life across America in the hopes of shaking free of its constraints. Possibly, he could lose it around a corner in one of the small towns he would traverse through: Hope, Arizona; Chickasha, Oklahoma; Onward, Mississippi; Pleasant Hill, Georgia. On a muggy August morn, Hancock dipped his front wheel into the Atlantic Ocean along the Georgia coastline of Tybee Island. The bothersome blue moth was still loitering nearby. But, by completion of the trek, the pest had taken on a new role for Hancock. The blue moth wouldn't be drowned in either ocean, or in the buckets of perspiration that Hancock shed along the highways of this country. He was with Hancock for the longer haul, and for once Hancock was okay with that.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This cycling memoir, written by the coordinator of the NCAA "March Madness" basketball tournament, begins in 2001, when Hancock's son, Will, died in an airplane crash, along with several members of the Oklahoma State basketball team and its staff. Grief stricken, the author and his wife stumbled through their daily routines, unable to conceive of anything that would bring them back to some sort of normality. Then inspiration struck. The author decided to follow through with a project he had been planning before his son's death: a cross-country bicycle trip. With his wife as his SAG (a biker acronym, meaning "support and guidance"), Hancock embarked on a journey that would take him from shore to shore and from numbing grief to new life. Much more than a sports book, this is an exploration of desolation and the incredible lengths we sometimes have to go to conquer it. Only the very cold reader will get through this one without shedding a few tears. David PittCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Bill Hancock is a grandfather, musician, writer, outdoorsman, marathon runner and former director of musical-theater productions. A graduate of the University of Oklahoma, Hancock works as an administrator of the NCAA men's basketball tournament. He also served in various administrative roles at the University of Oklahoma and the old Big Eight Conference, and so his ties throughout college sports are extensive. He has volunteered for the USOC at six summer Olympics games. This is his first book. Bill lives in Prairie Village, Kansas, with his high school sweetheart, Nicki, an award-winning high school English teacher.

From the perspective of a trans-am rider, the author captures the highs and lows of this kind of journey quite well and keeps the reader's attention on that aspect of the book. Considering the circumstances of the ride itself, it is a remarkable testament to parental loss, love, and striving for meaning after an unexplainable heart-rending tragedy. I found myself grabbing a highlighter as I read through this book marking off all the passages and reflections that were so very familiar to anyone having experienced the grieving process in the "early days" of grief (his bike ride took place only six months after his son Will was killed in a plane crash). From all the volumes

written about loss, this is a work that I definitely recommend and one I dearly appreciate.

Bill Hancock does an excellent job of conveying his family's feelings after the tragic crash of the Oklahoma State University plane in 2001. The death of a child has to be one of life's toughest experiences. It is obvious that Bill and Nicki's faith was instrumental in helping them get through the ordeal, and I'm sure it continues to help them years later.

Bill Hancock has a parent's worst nightmare, death of a child in a tragic accident. How do you survive and re-establish your life? How do you interact with the many people who don't know how to respond to your grief? How do you just put one foot in front of the other each day and how hard is it? This book explains all of this in a poignant manner. You will be in tears in the first chapter and again at the end but you will learn about dealing with the death of a loved one, about the beauty of our country and its people, and about a wonderful couple willing to share their story which may help many others. I could not recommend this book higher. NOTE: I heard of this book from "Outside the Lines" the Espn weekly show which discussed the 10 year anniversary of the OK St. basketball team plane crash. Bill was on the show and the title of his book was mentioned. You can tell from his short time on the show that he was a man of character and humility. Next time you decide to ride your bike across country Bill, don't do it cold turkey. At least train!

I originally bought this book for friends who lost their 16 year old son in an accident. This last year I bought it for myself and read it. If you have recently suffered the loss of a loved one it is very difficult to get through the first chapter where the author details the loss of his son and the immediate reactions of the family and friends. After the first chapter the book moves into the difficult ups and downs of getting on with every day life with while being gripped by overwhelming grief. There are so many places in this book where the author is able to put incredible perspective on what most people would consider ordinary events. Whether you've suffered the loss of a loved one or not, you will read this book and look at people and things differently than you did before. I hope that I am a better friend to people who suffered a loss because of the understanding this book gives the reader. I found myself disappointed as I was nearing the end, because the book was so well written that I wanted to keep on going with Bill Hancock beyond his cross country bike ride. I "googled" the author and contacted him by e-mail to tell him why I had bought 2 copies of the book and how much it meant to me after reading it. He responded the next day with a very thoughtful e-mail. I highly recommend reading *Riding With the Blue Moth* by Bill Hancock.

How do you find meaning to life after a tragedy of inexplicable pain and horror? Shakespeare said the greatest tragedy on earth is when a parent buries a child. How do you find grace, courage, the grit and will to carry on in the presence of such grief?...That's what this book is about. The redemption and renewal of hope of one, Bill Hancock. He had been around athletics and athletes all his life, around those who talked about courage and the need to keep on keeping-on when times were "tough." Now, Bill Hancock, had to see if those things were true...If he could find those elements in his life that he had taught to others...This is the story of one man's redemption through grace and a most unusual odyssey. This book will stand the test of time.

For anyone who lost a child, this is a very inspiring book. I remember where I was when I heard of the plane crash because I was an OSU basketball fan because of Eddie Sutton. I visited Gallagher-Iba Arena to see the memorial after reading this book. I appreciated Bill Hancock talking of his relationship with his sons. That set the stage for the section about the bike ride. I appreciated the tell it like it was theme of the bike ride, especially his mention of traveling through Monticello and Dermott, Arkansas. His retelling of his ride, with his wife as SAG of the ride, would make me want to do something like that because he did it for an altruistic motive. I would recommend this book to anybody and my copy is loaned to someone else.

I enjoyed the read and the journey it took you on. Great viewpoint on life and loss. I'll now play ping-pong with my son if he wants to before work.

Knowing the family and having been a good friend of Will's in high school and college, it took a long time before I was ready to read this incredibly personal tribute to him and the way his family (and father in particular) chose to work through their grief. A must-read about love, loss and perseverance.

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