

# Q & A

## Q & A with Bill VanCanagan



Bill VanCanagan is a partner with Datsopoulos, MacDonald & Lind, P.C. in Missoula, Mont. A 1978 graduate of Stanford University with a degree in economics, VanCanagan earned his law degree from the University of Montana in 1981 and an LL.M. in federal taxation from Boston University in 1982. His practice focuses on business planning and transactions. His practice areas include entrepreneurial and emerging companies, mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures and business combinations, securities regulation, corporate counseling and international transactions. His clients include businesses, owners and investors in the areas of manufacturing, technology, medical devices, financial transactions, recreational products, and real estate transactions.

**Q: Before becoming an attorney, what was your first job?**

**A:** I worked in construction and later in the restaurant management business.



A holiday photo of the VanCanagan family, including Bill and his wife Lisa, their dog Izzy, daughter Michelle, and son Michael.

**Q: What motivated you to pursue a legal career?**

**A:** I had a passion for trouble shooting and solving problems; desire to build strong negotiating skills; and passion and desire to help people.

**Q: Who was your chief mentor and how did he or she influence your career?**

**A:** My chief mentor was my former partner Milt Datsopoulos who passed away in 2022. Milt took me under his wing and became my mentor early on in my career. He was a lawyer with national and international level skills. He understood people and what motivates them and had the uncanny ability of being able to immediately identify the underlying issue(s) affecting the decision-making in any negotiation. He influenced my career and my life in innumerable ways.



Bill and Lisa enjoying the sights at Universal Studios in Orlando with their daughter Michelle and her boyfriend, Jake Shipp, pictured back left.

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**Q: What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?**

**A:** Understand the concept of value creation and the necessity of making a paradigm shift from focusing on income to building value in a business. Value creation requires a vision and then relentless execution to make the vision a reality.

**Q: What is one thing you would like to learn to do?**

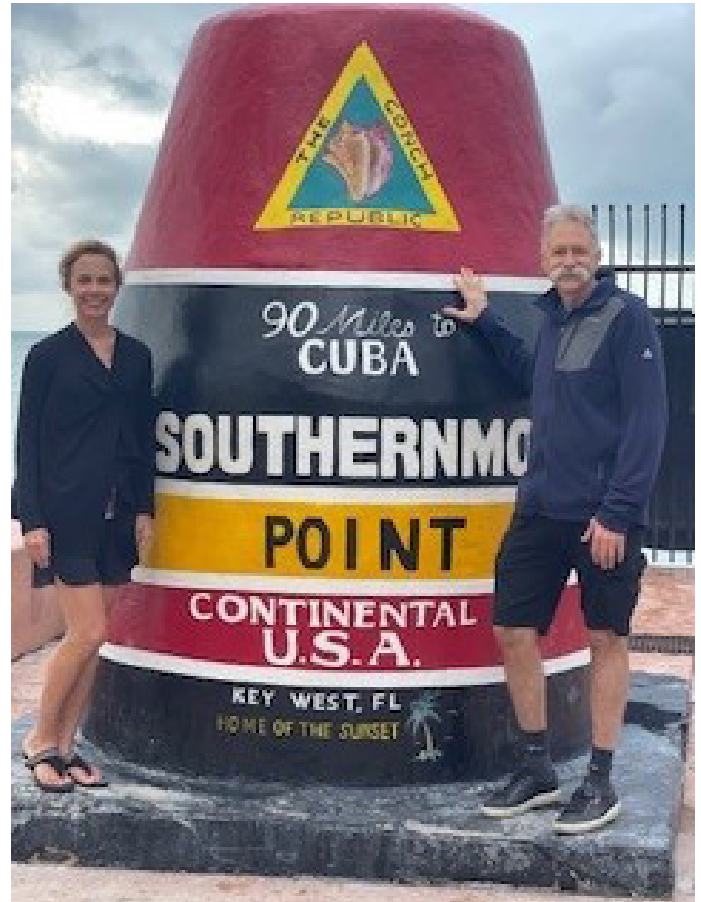
**A:** There is no single thing that I want to learn how to do. Rather, my focus is on continuously building skills and relationships with people who do great things.

**Q: What is your proudest career achievement?**

**A:** I orchestrated the sale of the historical properties located in the Montana towns of Virginia City and Nevada City to the Montana Historical Foundation; helped save the copper mine in Butte, Montana from closure; and assisted in the acquisition of the railroad from the Burlington Northern, Santa Fe Railroad Co.



The VanCanagan family on a trip to Orlando, home of the Walt Disney World Resort.



The VanCanagans while visiting Key West, Fla.

**Q: What other career path might you have chosen?**

**A:** If not law, I would probably have pursued a career in business.

**Q: What do you do to give back to your community?**

**A:** I work on a myriad of community development projects including the proposed Missoula Convention Center; represent various non-profit organizations; and assist start-up businesses with structural, governance and finance guidance and connections to potential funding sources.

**Q: Can you share a positive referral experience within Primerus™?**

**A:** The primary referral benefit I have appreciated from Primerus is the connection with many great lawyers in the Primerus community who have become close friends and colleagues and tremendous resources not only for legal work but for new ideas, experience, and input.

**Q: What is your most treasured material possession?**

**A:** I don't really have a treasured material possession. Although I enjoy some material possessions, I try not to focus too much on them.

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### **Q: What is your happiest childhood memory?**

**A:** My happiest childhood memory is fishing on the Montana rivers and lakes with my dad.

### **Q: What is your favorite movie and book?**

**A:** I do not have any one favorite movie but enjoy many movies in general. My favorite book may be "Hamilton" which is the life story of one of the nation's most prolific founding fathers.

### **Q: What is the most awe-inspiring place you have visited?**

**A:** The most inspiring place I have visited is Flathead Lake, Montana for its natural beauty and majestic mountains and scenery.

### **Q: What are your favorite leisure time pursuits?**

**A:** My leisure time pursuits include reading, speech writing, business development, golf, boating, and fishing.

### **Q: What is your favorite famous or inspirational quote?**

**A:** "Success is becoming what you want to be and is attained by applying your energies to your work and you will apply your energies in exact proportion to the intensity of your desire." ~ Wallace Wattles

### **Q: Who is on your guest list for the ideal dinner party?**

**A:** The three top business leaders in the state of Montana and the three top elected officials.

### **Q: What are the top three items on your bucket list?**

**A:** Trips to the Mediterranean, Europe, and the Pacific Rim.



Lisa and Bill at their condo on the Flathead River, Mont.