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## He still wants to be 'thriller' showman on stage

COMMENTARY

By BILL MOOR



When Bobby Williams was asked his name at sixth-grade basketball tryouts, he put a little flair into his answer.

"I spelled my name out -- B ... o ... double b ... y," the Riley High School junior says.

The coach liked that. "He started calling me Double B," Bobby says.

For a while anyway.

The nickname stuck. Bobby didn't.

"I got cut," he says of those Madison Elementary School days.

No big deal. Bobby went home and made his own school mascot costume.

"I was the Cub for the Madison Cubs, and I would dance out there in front of the cheerleaders at games," he admits.

He probably got more floor time that way than he ever would have as a player. "I never have been



Riley High school junior Bobby Williams conveys his message through rap.

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much of an athlete," he says.

He always has been a performer, though -- or a showman as he likes to call himself.

"During the sixth-grade talent show, I pretended to be Michael Jackson and did a rendition of 'Thriller.'"

Just turned 17, Bobby now goes out and performs a hip-hop routine at various youth functions and venues around the Midwest.

And, yep, his stage name is Double B.

"I try to convey a positive message to other kids through my rap songs," he says. "I use my music as a reflection of life. Spirituality is a big part of my life."

Recently, he says, he performed in front of almost 400 kids at Granger Community Church. He stays busy around this area, but he also has taken his act over to Ohio and up to Michigan.

"If they ask how much I charge, I usually say \$100," he says. "If they say, 'Is that all,' I'll take what they want to give. If they say, 'How about \$50,' I take that, too. It's really not about the money."

He won't turn it down, though.

Bobby would like to be a full-time musician after school. But he enjoys other activities, too.

"I also like writing and painting and sketching," he says.

He doesn't always like school.

"I don't have anything against Riley, and I do have a lot of friends there," he says. "But I am not the kind of person that a high school seems to cater to. I don't fit the mold."

And his grades? "It seems I either get an A or a D, depending on if I like the class or not," he says.

Bobby admits he is a bit of a maverick and often shares some of his controversial views in the school newspaper, The Riley Review.

"One of the teachers, Mr. (Jim) Berger, challenged me to a debate on some of my opinions," Bobby says. "So we had one in the school's little auditorium. About 100 people showed up."

Bobby thinks the debate might have been a tie. "I did come away with respect for Mr. Berger for doing that, but I still think my views are right."

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## About this column

Bill Moor recently talked to both a journalism and a creative writing class, taught by Riley High School's Marcia Kovas.

He told the students he could find a story worth writing in just about any person.

He later interviewed three random students from the classes to prove his point. This is the third of three columns from those interviews.

He is not afraid to try different stories. He pretended to be a homeless person for a day and wrote about that. He has interviewed Arun Gandhi, the grandson of India's great peacemaker, Mahatma Gandhi. He tried to forge his own press pass so he could talk to controversial filmmaker Michael Moore at a conference in Wisconsin.

"I know some people won't like this, but I really like Michael Moore," he says "I think he gives the little people a voice."

Locally, he is a big fan of Charlotte Pfeifer, a family friend and the president of South Bend's Common Council.

He also gets along with his parents, Rich Williams, a sociology professor at Notre Dame, and Anne Mannix, who writes grants for low-income housing.

"I practice my act in front of the mirror in my room, and one of them will sometimes have to yell, 'That's enough,' " Bobby says.

He usually stops.

Anything really strange about him? "When I was 10 or 11, I had about 200 Pillsbury Doughboy (collectibles)," he says. "Why? Just because, I guess."

Yeah, he also likes girls. "But most of the time, they end up breaking my heart, and I end up writing songs about them," Bobby says. "So I have the last word."

That's Double B -- which obviously doesn't stand for Bashful and Bland.

**Bill Moor's column appears on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. Contact him at [bmoor@sbtinfo.com](mailto:bmoor@sbtinfo.com), or write him at the South Bend Tribune, 225 W. Colfax Ave., South Bend, IN 46626; (574) 235-6072.**

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