



Bill Kent

October 31, 1946 - May 12, 2023

William Wayne "Bill" Kent, Sr., 76, Portland, Oregon (formerly of Topeka, Kansas) passed away May 12, 2023.

Bill was the first of five children. He was born October 31, 1946, in the Kansas State Tuberculosis Sanatorium in Norton, Kansas. His father, Duane Carlton Kent, and mother, Regina Theresa Best Kent, were patients in the facility.

Bill's childhood was not easy. Bill told his son that he only saw his father from a distance a couple of times and his father died when Bill was about 10 years old. He found himself in relatives' homes and foster homes throughout his childhood, which would shape his life-long career in social work. Despite the difficulty, as an old friend said, "No matter how bad things got, Bill always persisted."

Bill had a brother, Robbie, and three sisters: Judith, Margo, and Regina. He attended Catholic Schools in Topeka, Kansas. In his 1964 class at Hayden High School, there were five first cousins: Gary Best, Mike Rees, Kathy Evens, Tressa Berberick, Margaret Jo Donnelly, and William Wayne (Bill) Kent, Senior

Bill was very social and had many friends. He was a member of "The Roof," a group of 15 guys who had a clubhouse in a converted carriage house behind

one of the mansions in the Potwin area of Topeka. They played cards, huddled around an antique wood-burning stove in the winter, played the latest hit records, and had a large radio for listening to the news. Bill was a member of the Order of the Arrow at Camp Jayhawk Boy Scout Camp.

When the Vietnam war was at its height, Bill joined the US Marine Corps. He was involved in several battles and was wounded twice and received two Purple Hearts. Bill saved the life of a Hayden classmate who was badly wounded. Bill left his company and stayed with him overnight to make sure he didn't get too much morphine. This was Bill. He always wanted to help his fellow man.

After he was discharged from the Marine Corps, Bill traveled to Europe with his good friend Art Griggs for the summer. He returned to Topeka with many wonderful memories and then turned his attention to his education. He got an undergraduate degree from Washburn University and later earned a master's degree in social work from the University of Kansas.

Bill found real passion in his work and the outdoors. In summer trips to the mountains in Colorado and to Glacier National Park in Montana, he scurried around the mountain and caught dozens of Rainbow trout and Arctic Graylings. Bill always caught enough fish to feed the entire camp. In the spring, Bill could be counted on to bring in a big harvest of morel mushrooms he had found in Wild Cat Holler near Eskridge, Kansas.

OREGON

In 1977 Bill got married in Topeka to Sarah Jane Hall and moved to Pendleton, Oregon where he worked for 30 years for the Children Services Division, becoming a supervisor for multiple counties in Eastern Oregon. He had a son, Bill Jr. in 1980 in Pendleton, Oregon and fell in love with the world-famous rodeo the "Pendleton Round-Up," where he volunteered for 30 years.

He loved hunting, fishing, and camping in the area. Bill loved to hunt deer & elk with the Ledbetter family and took multiple trips to Alaska for months at-a-time to fish with friends. One year, he traveled to Idaho and shot an antelope. Bill loved hunting with his Browning 7mm Magnum bolt-action rifle. While he built up an impressive collection of guns, he was a gun safety nut and also believed that AR-style semi-auto rifles belonged in the hands of the military and not civilians.

After 30 years, he retired from the State of Oregon, and traveled. He volunteered at a state park along the Oregon coast called Cape Blanco, and later moved to Eugene, Oregon. As he got further from his career, he struggled with PTSD from Vietnam, but got sober and was proud that he never touched alcohol again for over 20 years. In Eugene, he became a huge Oregon Duck fan, holding football season tickets with his son for over a decade. In the last period, he lived happily near his son in Portland until he passed on May 12, 2023.

AFTER THOUGHTS

Quick note: My dad was not one to talk about or be proud of his service in the military. He never really cared for me to call on Veterans Day for example and thank him... he'd usually respond, "Huh, yeah, well, I served for both of us and I was never going to let you go into the military because war is hell." Again, your perspective is different than mine, I saw the drinking and the severe PTSD and can't ever recall him being proud of his service. He talked about it like the movie born on the 4th of July where he signed up proudly to serve his country, but then came back and felt like he didn't belong in his own country and didn't want to tell people he went to Vietnam - which he told me was the reason he decided to take the trip to Europe and just leave the US.

Bill like many Vietnam vets suffered with their treatment from the public when he came back. A black mark on the American public.

A Celebration of Bill's Life will be Saturday, July 8, at 1 p.m., downstairs at Mother Teresa of Calcutta Catholic Church.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUL 8. 1:00 PM (CT)

Downstairs at Mother Teresa of Calcutta Catholic Church
2014 NW 46th Street
Topeka, KS 66618

Tribute Wall



“ So sorry for your loss, Bill and I were in high school together...a while ago!
Jim Nelson

Jim Nelson - June 10, 2023 at 02:09 PM

DH

“ I was a classmate of Bill. We went to school together for 12 years. He was a very nice person although quite shy. It sounds as though he had a good life after high school, of course not in the Viet Nam war. His friend Art Griggs was also a friend of mine. May God and the angels lead him home and may he have a peaceful journey to his heavenly home. May God bring comfort and peace to his family.
RIP Bill.

Donna Beasley Harrington - June 09, 2023 at 05:49 PM