



William Wier Hillgaertner

August 31, 1939 - October 17, 2018

William "Bill" Hillgaertner, 79, unexpectedly died October 17, 2018, with his daughter by his side in Yokohama, Japan.

Bill was born August 31, 1939 in St. Louis, Missouri, and moved to Witch Hazel, Oregon, when he was young. Graduating Hillsboro High School at the age of 16, he embarked on his career of public service by volunteering with the Orenco fire department.

The United States Marine Corps offered him the chance to work with aviation (one of his long time passions), and in 1958, he became a Hollywood Marine, graduating from MCRD San Diego. His advanced academic prowess caught someone's eye, and in 1959, he was offered the chance to attend the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. While at the Naval Academy, his ear for languages came into play - while on a mid cruise to Quebec, the ship's captain used him as the French interpreter! He was commissioned a Marine Corps Second Lieutenant (2ndLt) in 1963, and after spending time at MCB Quantico for TBS and Camp Lejeune as an artillery officer plus volunteering to go to Vietnam multiple times, Bill was sent to the Defense Language Institute at the Presidio of Monterey to become an interrogator/translator. He did two tours in Vietnam and then decided to leave the Marine Corps and start a family.

Although he wanted to spend time as a firefighter, Multnomah County (OR) convinced him to take the Sheriff's test, where he was swiftly hired. He served time on Multnomah County River Patrol, and as a Sheriff deputy, Detective, and Arson Investigator, before taking a leave of absence to get his Masters of Public Administration from Lewis & Clark College. He then spent a little over a year as the Benton County (OR) Liaison between Law Enforcement and the courts, before becoming the Chief of Police for Camas, Washington in 1980. In 1989, after completing the FBI National Academy in Quantico, VA (where he ran the same obstacle courses he had 25 years earlier as a 2ndLt!) he was promoted to the Director of Public Safety for Camas, where he served as both the Police and Fire Chief. He was happy to get back to the firefighting side!

After retiring, he worked several jobs that interested him, including in pathology for Legacy Health Systems (those patients never complain!), Washington State Patrol Commercial Vehicle Officer, and his final job as the storekeeper/mentor/unofficial counselor at United Natural Foods Incorporated in Ridgefield, WA.

Bill was very active in community service - he was a charter member of several organizations, including the Kiwanis Club of Greater Camas-Washougal, the Columbia River Detachment of the Marine Corps League (where he also served as the inaugural commandant), and the non-profit theatre group "Blue Parrot". He and his family were active in theatre for many years with both Blue Parrot and the Champoeg Historical Pageant. Some of the other volunteer work he did was with Community Chest, Special Olympics, Volksmarching, American Red Cross as a Certified First Aid instructor, and the Lewis & Clark Young Marines, where he assisted with Marine Corps history and served as the head Poolie Instructor.

Bill loved spending time with family and traveling with his daughter and grandson. Some of his favorite trips were The Wizarding World of Harry Potter

in Florida; Disneyland, multiple Army/Navy games (GO NAVY! BEAT ARMY!); driving the trans-Canada highway coast to coast; Iceland; and London, England for 2017 Remembrance Day. His final trip was a cruise from Canada to Japan, via Alaska and Russia. Sadly, Bill had a medical emergency and was rushed to a Japanese hospital when the cruise ended, where he passed away.

He lived a full life. Bill is survived by daughter Nona (Hillgaertner) Mallicoat; son William "Leon" Hillgaertner; grandson Hunter Mallicoat; sister Peggy Hillgaertner; and brothers Donald and Richard Hillgaertner. A Memorial Service is being held at Evergreen Memorial Gardens in Vancouver, WA, at 4:00pm on November 16th, 2018. All are welcome. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the William Hillgaertner Scholarship - NW Regiment of the Young Marines - PO Box 357, La Center, WA 98629, or in his name to the National Museum of the Marine Corps - www.usmcmuseum.com.

Tribute Wall



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Evergreen Memorial Gardens - July 03, 2025 at 09:02 PM