

WILLIAM RAYMOND CALVERT

February 15, 1938 - August 16, 1997

Born in Wickett, Texas, to Clyde “Cactus” and Ruby Othel Calvert, young “Willie Ray” spent his early years after World War II in both Odessa and McCamey: He was a certified welder by the time he turned 11 and helped earn the family paycheck with his father Cactus as itinerant welders. He also spent many enjoyable hours helping Uncle Jim in his McCamey bakery; the man who inspired Bill’s culinary talents. As a boy, he loved hunting, fishing and hiking--in that order. His sister Barbara said, “the hiking was mainly out of losing the rest of the hunting party and having to find them again”!

In his Junior year of High school, Bill joined the Marine Corps Reserve. After graduating in May 1956 and with the help of the Marine Corp Commander, he obtained an appointment to the Naval Academy.

In January of ‘57, he consented to a blind date and met Ruthie Corcoran. Ruth’s entry in her “Him Book” after the evening was “He’ll make someone a nice husband someday”. They went out again on Easter break of that same year--Bill said that this is when he knew that he loved her. Ruth was oblivious to this, but still enjoyed his company. They spent June week together, and every weekend Bill was free. In August of ‘58, Bill brought his “girlfriend” home to meet his Texas the family fishing -trip. Ruth got seasick and can’t stand fish, but Bill had NEVER brought a girl home so they all knew she was the one (even though Ruth didn’t yet!). They got engaged Valentine’s Day 1959, but Ruth called it off in January of 1960 (and sent all the gifts back!). A week before Bill was to graduate he told Ruth “You’re going with me after graduation, married or not!” Ruth said O.K. (finally) and thirty-seven years later they were still in love and committed to each other.

The next years brought major changes to Bill’s life:

1960 Engineering Officer, USS Dennis J. Buckley, stationed in Long Beach, California

1961 Daughter Teresa Lenore born

1962 Daughter Lorey Ruth born

1963 Son William Redman Calvert born

Ruth had promised Bill not to name him “Jr.”, but just couldn’t resist getting it close enough for continual confusion over Social Security Numbers, credit ratings and answering machines!

1964 Graduate school studies of International Relations in Monterey, California

1965 Bureau of Naval Personnel in Arlington, Virginia

1967-68 Commodore, River Boat division, Vietnam War

Bill was always a man of his word. He told his family he would come back from Vietnam. He did and brought most of the guys on his ten boats back with him, which was no small accomplishment for that War.

1968-70 Executive Officer, USS Richard B. Anderson, stationed San Diego, California

1970-71 Naval War College, finished Graduate Degree in Newport, Rhode Island

1971 Captain, USS John R. Perry -Destroyer class, stationed in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

On July 31, 1972 while out on maneuvers, the Perry was caught in a typhoon. After securing the ship and on his way back down to quarters, Bill slipped on the ladder (stairwell) and hit his head, unknowingly breaking his neck and becoming paralyzed from the shoulders down. He spent four weeks on a Stryker frame at Tripler Army Hospital before he was considered stable enough to be airlifted to the VA. Hospital in Long Beach.

1974 Retired from the service and moved to Orange, California where he resided until his death.

Did the accident change him? How could it not? He went from being a man who could do many things well, to a man with a wealth of knowledge, but no familiar way to express it. Bill was never a quitter. Surrounded by the amazing love and commitment of his soul mate, Ruth, and the encouragement of his family, shipmates and friends, he learned an entirely new way to live. He studied and got his advanced Ham Radio License in 1977-WB6YNR was heard many an afternoon all over the world. He learned how gravity and the muscles he did have left could work in his favor. He took care of many things for Ruth, drove his own van, and became active on the board of the California Paralyzed Veterans Association, working to help improve the lives of other Spinal Cord Injury patients and their families.

He was always available to his children and became a key influence in the lives of his son-in-law-Lorey's husband, Eric Persing, and his son Bill's wife, Vibeke Calvert. He was overjoyed to be present at the birth of his first grandchild, Jazmine Hanna Persing and handled his new command post of grandfather "Nanny" to Jaz and his grandson Soren, with great distinction. William Raymond Calvert was a man of extraordinary character, wisdom and loyalty. From his difficult upbringing in the small rural towns of West Texas, Bill developed a quiet strength that would become an invaluable resource in the challenges he faced throughout his life. Although Bill faced more hardship in life than most, he was deeply grateful to God for his life and always extended compassion to those less fortunate.

Bill's life was a sacrifice of love-a deep well of commitment unchangeable by circumstance or adversity. He said what he meant and he meant what he said.

Bill believed that the greatest treasure in his life was his family and friends.