



## Don L Mathews

February 13, 1949 - November 9, 2018

On November 9th, 2018, after a brave battle with cancer, Captain Don L Mathews, 69, quietly cast off the lines of this life and eased toward his next great horizon, as family, including his loving wife, Fran and children Brendan and Caitie, wished him farewell. A third-generation Oregonian, Don loved his roots. He was born in Eugene Oregon to parents Sheldon and Ruth Mathews. Work on his family's McKenzie River Dairy in Springfield, tutoring in all things mechanical by his beloved Grampa Guy Mathews, hunting and fishing trips from the Cascades to the Coast blended with a deep love for his brothers Randy and Russ Mathews all led Don to describe his childhood as perfect. Don attended Thurston High School where he distinguished himself on the football team and as president of the Future Farmers of America. He joined Oregon's booming timber industry in the late 1960's. Taking tech courses at Lane Community College led him to a lifelong advocacy of trade schools. Don attained the distinction of being the youngest welder ever hired by the Springfield Weyerhaeuser mill. He launched a 20-year career in commercial fisheries in the mid-70s, chasing albacore tuna, his favorite "adrenalin pump," crab, longlined black cod and halibut. He developed a long chain of friends and stories as he delivered seafood from San Francisco to the Bering Sea. He met his true love, Fran (Rhines Dixon), in Kodiak, Alaska in the mid-80s. He loved to tell how a 'feisty little harbor guard' made him move his boat, and then later met him for a drink that stretched into 35 years of love, family and friends. The family settled in Newport in 1991, happily blending with their local

family and fishing friends. Inspired by the opening of the Oregon Coast Aquarium, Don and Fran created Marine Discovery Tours in 1994: now an icon of Oregon outdoor adventure tourism and marine education. Don used his broad spectrum of skills, from a 1600 hundred-ton captain's license, to endless fabrication projects. A true highlight was working with the Bandon Submarine Cable Council, connecting trawl fisheries with Oregon classrooms, funded by AT&T Wireless. His booming "Welcome Aboard" was delivered with a smile to every guest, from local Montessori students to international visitors. Don loved community service, from maintaining a Buy Local view, leading the team that anchored the Maritime Museum to serving as one of Newport's port commissioners for 13 years. His vast network of family and friends will remember him as a laughing, generous guy who dug out his wallet for a needy street neighbor, built packages with his buddies at Rogue & Mo's for local fundraising, and united his floating neighbors with holiday boat parades to raise money for the local hospital. Don leaves a technicolor legacy of choosing to make every day full of fun. He built a lifetime of happy moments that included hugging Fran, his kids and friends a lot, rebuilding anything mechanical, watching loud Blazer games from his recliner, landing the biggest crab catch possible, playing cribbage fireside at elk camp, continuous birthday grilled cheese and tuna sandwiches with cherry pie, spontaneous movie dates, daily breakfast with a free Oregonian at the Barge Inn, thundering out of town with his honorary motorcycle brothers and sharing tall tales with all along his path. Don Mathews is survived by his wife, Fran Mathews, son Brendan Mathews, daughter Caitlin Mathews, brother and sister-in-law Randy (Cindy) Mathews, His Aunts Marge (George) Skochenko and Donna (Wayne) Beinert, Uncle Del (Patty) Mathews, as well as numerous cousins, nieces, nephews, extended family and friends. He is predeceased by his mother, father and his brother Russ Mathews.

A celebration of Don's life will be held at the Newport Elk's Club starting at 1 pm on Saturday, December 15th. Dress code: Casual and Colorful -

Suspenders Welcome.

Donations, in lieu of flowers, can be made in Don's honor to Newport Fishermen's Wives Association, PO Box 971, Newport, OR 97365 or [newportfishermenswives.com](http://newportfishermenswives.com); Samaritan Pacific Hospice, PO Box 945, Newport, OR or [samhealth.org](http://samhealth.org); the American Cancer Society at [cancer.org](http://cancer.org)