William Jay "Bill" Ratliff

March 12, 1952 - July 5, 2025

William Jay “Bill” Ratliff passed away at his residence on July 5th, 2025. Born on March 12, 1952, Bill was 73 years old. Bill lived on the Alsea River just east of Tidewater, Oregon. He died of natural causes.

His love of the outdoors came from our parents Donald E. Ratliff, Sr. and Maurine C. Ratliff, who predeceased him. Our family loved fishing and hunting trips.

Bill graduated from Corvallis High School in 1970 and Oregon State University (OSU) in 1975, majoring in Fisheries and Wildlife. He grew up in Salem, Oregon and moved to Corvallis for 7th grade, and OSU for college. This gave him access to the Oregon Coast and the Cascade Mountains, both of which he loved.

Bill was a highly skilled woodworker, and with brother Ken built several drift boats to enhance their fishing adventures. They spent a summer as commercial fishermen in a dory. In taking the dory to Newport for the first time, halfway there, Bill looked back and said “HEY!” Dad and Ken looked - there was no boat on the trailer! They quickly made a U- turn near Toledo and headed back with a large lump in their throats, fearing the worst. After one mile, nothing. Two miles, nothing. Three, four, five, six miles, nothing. Then at seven miles back, there is the boat on the road with only some scraping on

the bottom runners! There was a line of parked pickups with onlookers scratching their heads. Embarrassed, they commenced with some help to load their boat back on the trailer.

After graduating from college, Bill served a tour in the U.S. Peace Corps in the Philippines, where brother Don visited him. Don remembers being ever so impressed, listening to Bill converse fluently with the locals in their native Tagalog language. They were a group of fishermen around a campfire, sharing a beverage, and it was clear from their camaraderie they loved and appreciated Bill, who had learned their language from the neighborhood children.

Bill worked twice with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) out of Newport, and between those stints spent several seasons in Oregon and Alaska commercial fishing and as a Foreign Fisheries Inspector on fishing vessels from around the world. Bill retired in 2024, and at his retirement ceremony received a “Keith Richards Award for Longevity in Fieldwork” for having “54,000 hours of outstanding field work and authentic tales from life in Oregon’s coast range.” Bill loved his work, which involved both attending the “trapper” (a fish trap on Tenmile Creek) and doing fish counts on the small streams of Oregon’s Coast Range. He told John that the ODFW would pay him to count the fish, and he gets his exercise too. He walked up these streams, and sometimes came out at a place where he had pre-positioned a bicycle and rode the bike back to his vehicle.

Bill is survived by his three brothers, John (Chris), Don Jr. (Marti), and Ken. Bill’s daughter is Kalyanii Kennedy, whose mother is Cecilia Kennedy. Kalyanii has been a nurse, is now a 4th year medical student at Western University, and is now doing clinical rotations at Good Samaritan Hospital, Corvallis. Bill’s grandson, David Kennedy is a junior at OSU, studying electrical engineering.

Bill has been supportive and very proud of their accomplishments.

Bill was a fan of OSU football and baseball; during the Beavers' recent post season baseball play, he told John, "They have to do something about their errors." He also supported the OSU Department of Fish and Wildlife in their mission through donations. If you wish to donate in Bill's name, do so to the OSU Department of Fish and Wildlife.

A Celebration of Life for Bill will be held 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, August 17th, 2025 at the Philomath Scout Lodge, 660 Clemens Mill Rd., Philomath, OR 97370.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

AUG **17**. 1:00 PM (PT)

Philomath Scout Lodge
660 Clemens Mill Road
Philomath, OR 97370

Tribute Wall

ML

1 file added to the tribute wall

Mike Lance - August 17, 2025 at 12:40 PM

ML

Bill was always a great friend to have show up to work each day. His passion for the work and his love for rivers, the ocean, and the fish that lived in them was always evident. I loved hearing his stories about fishing adventures and heroic bar crossings. Each day, he'd head out the door with a cheerful slogan, "Have fun. Be safe!" That's a slogan I will keep with me, and I will miss hearing it from Bill.

Mike Lance - August 17, 2025 at 12:37 PM

CL

I will always treasure the time I got to spend working with Bill, especially the days down at Tenmile Creek. Bill had so many entertaining stories from his time in the Philippines, commercial fishing, and working for ODFW; he lived a rich and unique life. My condolences to his family, we will all miss Bill.

Chris Lorion - August 17, 2025 at 10:43 AM

BP

My Deepest Condolences to the Ratliff Family for your loss. Bill was a truly unique and wonderful human being. I had the privilege of working with Bill on many many occasions over the course of my 15 year career at ODFW and have endured in some rugged wilderness adventures with Bill in the Oregon Coast. He was a gentle beast with an uncanny ability to always make people laugh, even in situations where the matter was no joke. He was a hard and dedicated worker and never complained and his greatest trait was his spirit which could never be broken. He will be sorely missed! Travel well old friend!

Brent Priz - August 15, 2025 at 01:34 PM

PK

Bill's enthusiasm, stories, and cheerful demeanor brought smiles to those around him. I appreciated seeing Bill each AQI season.
My condolences to his family for their loss.

Peggy Kavanagh - August 13, 2025 at 12:54 PM

DW

I had the pleasure of knowing and working with Bill for about 20 years. He was always kind, welcoming and a gentle sol. Poker games, fly fishing for cutthroat trout on the Alsea and his famous clam fritters will be missed! Thank you so much Bill, your friend Derek.

Derek Wilson - August 07, 2025 at 12:22 PM

ES

1 file added to the tribute wall

Erik Suring - August 06, 2025 at 05:39 PM

ES

1 file added to the tribute wall

Erik Suring - August 06, 2025 at 05:35 PM

JP

I'm really going to miss Bill. I always enjoyed seeing and talking to him every year at the big poker game. Very sorry to the Ratliff family, our thoughts and prayers are with you. Your friend Jeremy Puckett

Jeremy Puckett - August 05, 2025 at 04:10 PM

KG

1 file added to the album Tribute Wall

Kevin Gray - August 04, 2025 at 04:35 PM