

Bruce “Boxman” Wood

The life of a great warrior, husband, father, and friend came to an abrupt end on Monday, February 25, 2008. We ache in his absence but take comfort in knowing that legions of people have been touched by his lasting influence.

Bruce Victor Wood was born in Waterloo, Iowa on May 7, 1942 and was raised by hard-working, salt-of-the-earth parents who instilled in Bruce a strong work ethic and deep respect for the great outdoors. He met his future bride and the love of his life, Barbara Ann Maxeiner, at the age of 20 on a blind date while both were attending the University of Washington, marrying her in Seattle on August 8, 1964 after graduating with a B.S. degree in Logging Engineering.

Initially working for Weyerhaeuser as a civil engineer in the uninhabited forests surrounding Eugene, Oregon, Bruce answered the call of his country during Vietnam by joining the U.S. Navy, attending Officer Candidates School, and ultimately earning Naval Flight Officer wings in Pensacola, Florida. As an A-6 Intruder Bombardier / Navigator, he deployed overseas more than a half dozen times and went on to become one of the most accomplished warriors of his era, leading multiple squadrons and literally thousands of men and women in the service of our country.

“Boxman” earned many accolades for superior professional achievement: flying nearly 5,000 career hours in the A-6; bagging 915 carrier landings; commanding squadrons VA-52 and VA-128; serving as Executive Officer of aircraft carrier USS Ranger; serving as Commanding Officer of NAS Cubi Point in the Philippines; and numerous others. More importantly, he earned respect, honor, friendship, and appreciation from the men and women who served with and for him. Above all else, he was a true patriot and loved his military brethren both young and old – and they knew it, and they loved him too. Bruce’s 28-year Navy career was legendary and a source of great pride for him and his family. He retired as a Captain (O-6) in 1994 but never stopped fighting for his beliefs.

Bruce had always been a creative and passionate man with a long-held love of boating and fishing in the Pacific Northwest. He savored 6-8 week trips with Barbara in desolate northern Canadian waters on their 42’ Grand Banks, “Gray Eagle”, and cherished waking up early to share serene misty mornings amongst the trees, salmon, eagles, and orcas. He was an avid driftwood beachcomber and Native American historian who sought out tribal knowledge as eagerly as he collected raw material for his latest garden masterpieces. He had a knack for finding beauty in the most unassuming of sources – from shiny rocks and jagged seashells to grizzled old veterans and petrified tree chunks. Bruce and Barbara’s backyard is an homage to squirrels, birds, and many other of nature’s delights.

Bruce was a prolific writer who penned multiple boating articles for PassageMaker magazine as well as creating detailed manuscripts summarizing the history of, and his many experiences within, naval aviation. He was a broad-minded and self-motivated student, combining evening PBS nature programs with daytime diesel engine maintenance. Bruce loved to tinker and was never at a loss for finding something to fix,

improve, or clean. He enjoyed teaching others what he knew and had started a small boating instruction and yacht management business, Eagle Yacht Enterprises, to train new owners on the joys and practicalities of boating including navigation, safety, maintenance, etiquette, and – of course – happy hour. The latter tradition lives on with Bruce's family and friends, and all who knew him are encouraged to raise a glass or two in his honor.

Unbeknownst to nearly everyone – even those who were his very best, lifelong friends – Bruce struggled for decades with intense, recurring bouts of depression and service-related post-traumatic stress disorder. Too strong and too proud for his own damn good, Bruce suffered in isolated agony, grappling with an ever-imposing beast that attacked with cruel irony upon his upbeat, fun-loving self. The amplitude of the depression episodes increased over the years, eating away at his self-esteem and setting the stage of dread for the next inevitable battle to come. Ultimately the illness overcame him, and he submitted by taking his own life. We now feel distraught and empty without him in our midst.

Bruce and Barbara had been happily married for nearly 44 years, and together they raised three boys – Eric (deceased April 2006), Brian (with daughter Sydney), and Neil (with wife Corey). Granddaughter Sydney was a bright beam of sunshine in Bruce's life, and he loved to share in her innocence and new discoveries. Besides immediate family, he is survived by sister Jan, brother Lowell, and scores of great friends and neighbors. Although sometimes a grizzly on the outside, Bruce was always a big softie on the inside, and only Barbara really knew the gentle and kind disposition that was his true nature. He loved and was dearly loved by so many.

As per Bruce's wish, no memorial service will be held, but his cremated ashes are planned to be scattered at sea with military honors by the U.S. Navy. In lieu of flowers, remembrances may be made in memory of his son Eric to Seattle Children's Hospital Foundation, PO Box 50020, Seattle, WA 98145-2020.