

ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα, πολύτροπον

Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns

The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fagles

Bill Sterling dedicated himself to the word in all its forms, from epic poetry, recited aloud in its native ancient Greek or Latin, to fine conversation, to the teachings of the Buddha and his disciples; from an extensive correspondence replete with limericks and riddles, to words of love and wisdom to family and friends, to the education of new generations in the communities he loved, from Andover to Anderson Valley High School. We honor his life and miss the joy of his presence.

William Wallace Sterling, known as Bill to everyone, was born July 3, 1939 in Pasadena, California. His parents were depression-era immigrants from Alberta, Canada. Bill was joined by two sisters, Susie and Judy, and spent his early years in Pasadena, where he attended Polytechnic School.

In 1948, when Bill was nine years old, his father became president of Stanford University, and the family moved to a home on the Stanford campus. Bill finished middle school in Palo Alto and then went East to Phillips Andover Academy. He loved Andover, where he discovered both true academic rigor and amateur ice hockey, and was an All-New England Lacrosse player.

Bill returned to Stanford for college. He majored in history and cultivated his life-long passion for foreign and classical languages. He spent a year in Beutelsbach through Stanford-in-Germany, learning the language with high enthusiasm for its polysyllabic compounds. Awarded a Rhodes Scholarship, he traveled after graduation to study at Brasenose College, Oxford. He left Brasenose to marry Molly Merrill, whom he had met at Stanford, and to work in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Bill attended Harvard Law School, and then took a position at Heller, Ehrman, White & McCauliffe in San Francisco, specializing in commercial real estate transactions. He and Molly built a house among the redwoods in Mill Valley and raised two children, Alinor and Maury. He was an excellent lawyer, but the practice of law did not contain his interests. Dinner parties in Mill Valley mixed scholars of classical Greek with mythopoetic thinkers like Joseph Campbell. Bill taught himself Sanskrit and extended his knowledge of ancient Greek, Latin, and mythology. When he took his family for a three-month sabbatical to Crete in 1976, Bill was not able to communicate with the Homeric Greek he had learned, but made do with his German, which the locals had learned from the occupying German army during World War II. Bill also served on the Board of Hospice of Marin. He and Molly divorced in 1981.

Bill became a practicing Buddhist, studying with teachers from Zen, Tibetan, and Theravadan lineages. In 1983, Bill married Yvonne Rand, a Buddhist meditation teacher and settled with her in Muir Beach. Together with Yvonne, he founded The Callipeplon Society, a nonprofit

organization centered on widening the understanding of Buddhism in the United States and on adapting traditional Buddhist teachings for the lives of American lay practitioners. Over several decades, he deepened his understanding of Buddhist teachings, often combining them with his interest in classical languages including Sanskrit, Pali and Greek. Bill was an amateur ornithologist and botanist, and in the many workshops and seminars he led jointly with Yvonne, he often incorporated his enthusiasm for natural history. As an outgrowth of his commitment to the practice of Buddhism, Bill supported a range of efforts to address the plight of the people and the land of Tibet. He served on the board of Tibet House in New York City and on the board of the International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet. After practicing law with Heller, Ehrman for 28 years, Bill chose to continue his legal work as a solo practitioner.

In 2005, Bill and Yvonne moved to the Anderson Valley. Bill taught himself Spanish, which enabled him to engage with the valley's Spanish-speaking community as well as to read Cervantes in the original. He expanded educational resources in the valley, tirelessly raising money for classes, equipment and capital projects and serving on multiple nonprofit boards. The rhythm of the valley's farming life suited him and Yvonne and their joint interest in the natural world. Dinner parties, for which Bill created and saved detailed menus, which he cooked himself, brought together students of Buddhism with new friends from the Anderson Valley. He dedicated himself to caring for Yvonne, who began during this time to suffer from Alzheimer's disease. Bill treasured his work for the Anderson Valley, the warm local community that surrounded and supported both him and Yvonne; afternoons at Anderson Valley Panthers soccer games; and rides on the Skunk Train, in furtherance of his lifelong passion for full-size and model trains. In the last year of his life, Bill founded a new nonprofit called *Wings For Learning/Alas Para Volar: Better Education for Latinos in Rural Communities*.

Bill died at home, suddenly and without pain, on December 1.

He is survived by his wife Yvonne; by his two children and their families, including two grandchildren and one on the way; by his two sisters, and his niece and nephews and their families; and by his two stepchildren and their families.

A memorial service will be held in the Anderson Valley in January. Contributions in his memory may be made to *Wings for Learning/Alas Para Volar*, at Wings for Learning, P.O. Box 835, Boonville, CA 95415, or to The Callipeplon Society, P.O. Box 678, Philo, CA 95466.

For more information, or concerning Bill's memorial, please send an email to billsterlingmemorial@gmail.com, and one of the family will respond.