

From: Jeff Strachan
Sent: Monday, August 17, 2015 11:18 PM
Subject: William (Bill) Allen

Canadian Naval Divers Association

August 17, 2015

Re: William (Bill) Allen

Gentlemen,

I am writing to you on behalf of my (not so recently) deceased step-father, William Robert Allen.

Does anyone remember Bill Allen? Do you have some stories to tell about him? I would like to think he was an important fellow among your rather small and elite group. I believe Bill joined the Royal Canadian Navy, under aged, during World War II. I believe he was among the group of graduates from the first CD3 course on the East Coast.

Bill married my mom, Marjorie Helen (Lee,Strachan,Jones) in 1981, but they first started dating in Ottawa in 1978.

I knew Bill from that time, when I was 17 years old, until his death in 2008. However, I went to Kingston in 1980 and never actually lived with them.

I found myself in Chicago in 1983 (via Vancouver) to live with my natural father and his family. I have been living in the United States since 1984 but save for the last couple years and 2009 I have traveled to Ottawa/Montreal/Kingston at least once a year.

I spent many days, over the years, visiting with my mom and Bill. My wife and baby son and I spent Christmas with them in 1993 or so, when they were living in Golden Lake, Ontario. Bill and my mom also visited us here in Colorado back in the early '90s.

My mom died in the late nineties, leaving Bill alone. I believe it was a difficult time for Bill. I'm not sure he ever actually cooked for himself. Ever.

There was a time when he was getting along ok but was eating all his meals at a local restaurant and finally I received a call from some concerned friends that he was having trouble driving and indeed knowing even where he was (going). While he still had his faculties he signed over his power of attorney for health and wealth to me.

At first I moved him into a small apartment in Pembroke but it immediately became obvious that he needed full time care. He spent his last few years at Bonnechere Manor in Pembroke.

I remember Bill as a really interesting guy. He told me very little of what must have been a fascinating life. Just the few glimpses of what he told me he did in the Royal Canadian Navy and later with the DOD would make for newsworthy events today.

I know that Bill finished his career behind a desk, but I also know he spent a great deal of time under water. Deep water.

I knew him as a retired old fart, very quiet. Almost clumsy. But still, he told me of the tasks of a Clearance Diver. He also told me of smart mines and torpedoes and mini submarines. He also told me of some of the very cool cars he had, although I can't believe he himself ever worked on them. I will say early on when I first met him he and my mom went to Florida and he left me the keys to his '69 Thunderbird.

Haaaa!!!!

I have had some personal physical, emotional and financial problems the last few years and have not been able to properly honor this man. I am asking for your help to present to your members an opportunity to comment on their memories and adventures they may have had with Bill.

I think it was 2006 or so, I was on my way to the Canadian GP in Montreal, I took Bill out for a beer. He knew who I was and thanked me for taking care of his affairs. We discussed that when his time was up he could be cremated and his ashes to be buried with my mom and also spread into the Great Lakes.

In 2007 when I went to visit Bill his condition had deteriorated significantly. He did not recognize me and, well, we have all seen it.

I am ashamed to say I did not visit him when I was in the Ottawa Valley in 2008, just a month before he died. I was drinking heavily at that time and did not handle his funeral responsibly. I didn't handle it, at all. I think the funeral home ran a short obituary. I split his ashes and left some with the cemetery where my mom is in Pelham, Ontario, and I still have the rest of him with me today.

I told my good friend Stephen Bigelow, who was with me in that joy ride in Bill's T-Bird in 1978, and also helped me move all of Bills stuff from the house to the apartment and back again, about the conversation I had with Bill about his ashes. Steve said, hey, why not the 7 seas!

A fanciful plan indeed, but not really the point. The point is to celebrate the man, his career and his accomplishments.

Bill told me one time, when I was visiting one summer, that he had been approached by a fellow who wanted to write his biography. I'm not sure why, but Bill was annoyed by that fellow. It is too late for Bill to tell his own story, but perhaps your members can share parts.

I see you are having a reunion in Victoria in a few weeks. I have a number of photos and other memorabilia. (As well as Bill's remains himself!) I wonder if I could wangle an invitation to that? I would like to share some of these photos and drawings I have with the club, indeed, all of Canada, if you would have me.

Let this be the first letter to get the ball rolling on me doing right by Mr. Bill Allen.

Sincerely,

Jeffery (Jeff) Strachan