

# Gilbertson Funeral Home and Cremation Service

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## William Thomas Heaphy

( August 24, 1940 - October 12, 2024 )

Born in Beverly, MA to Frances Bridget (Hickey) and Thomas Christopher Heaphy, Bill's first few years were spent living on the Loring Estate with his older sister Frances aka "Toots", while their Irish Immigrant father worked as the caretaker for the Loring Family. Sadly, Bill's mother died a week shy of his fifth birthday. Toots lovingly took on the role of mom and protector. Not a day passed when dad wouldn't remind us of the sacrifices his sister made to keep him on the right path. When he could slip away from the watchful gaze of his big sister (and her friends) dad would ride his bike to the Norfolk Airport and watch the former military guys fly their single engine airplanes and gliders. This set into motion a life bigger than he could ever have imagined. Immediately after graduating from Franklin High School, Bill enlisted in the Air Force and was stationed at Hickam Field in Honolulu. After four years in the Air Force, Bill enrolled at Spartan School of Aeronautics in Tulsa and joined the Oklahoma Air National Guard. It was there that a flight school friend roped him into a hastily planned blind date with a student nurse from St. John's Hospital. Bill and Nita were married in Tulsa on Dec 30, 1964. The young pilot and young nurse found themselves moving cross-county as Bill pursued his dream of being a Commercial Airline Pilot. In 1966 Bill was hired by the Flying Tigers Line. They bought their first house in Bellevue in 1970 and moved to Camano Island in 1988. He proudly retired at age 60 as a senior Captain on the 747. A large part of his career was flying the international route which meant he was gone for a couple weeks and then home for a couple weeks. The time at home was filled with projects; a Seabee float plane, a Stinson float plane salvaged from a tornado, multiple sail boats and a notoriously testy Jaguar XKE. He enjoyed shooting Trap at the Seattle Gun Club and Duck hunting in the Cherry Valley. His best friends were also Tigers pilots and their time together usually involved boats, planes, raucous laughter, and a healthy disregard for authority. I am not sure the Harbor Master was laughing when three of them casually towed a wrecked Seabee through the Ballard Locks. He always made time for us kids, supporting all our hobbies and our Catholic educations. He also made sure that our Soap Box Derby cars had the proper weight distribution for optimum acceleration.



Retirement brought ponies for the grandkids and a failed attempt at cattle ranching. He was the first to admit that naming the cows and their calves was a bad idea. Bill and Nita enjoyed crossing the country in their new motorhome and welcomed a chocolate lab puppy that they met at the

Evergreen Gun Club. Dad expanded his Trap shooting to yearly competitions in Arizona and Hawaii.

He was “Irish Catholic” to his core, loyal to family and friends and generous beyond measure. He loved good music, good hunting dogs and family road trips. And while his Boston accent revealed his birthplace, he was truly at home in the PNW and could not imagine living anywhere else. Most of all, he loved his wife, our mom, Nita. He felt very strongly that his late mother was his guardian angel and brought them together. Bill and Nita were married for almost 60 years. He leaves behind his kids Kelly (Paul), Tom (Sandy) and Francie (Rob), his granddaughters Kate, Taylor, Mary, and Bridget, his grandsons Christopher and Rory, numerous nieces and nephews and his cousins in Ireland. He was preceded in death by his parents, Nita’s parents, his sister Frances and Brother-in-law John Turco, his Oklahoma in-laws Marjorie Binkley, Delano Lang, Stan Gray, Lee Cox and nephew Luke Lang. He was a proud member of the Air Line Pilots Association, Knights of Columbus, Stanwood’s Twin City Sportsmen Club, Skagit Gun Club and former President of the Marysville Gun Club.

A celebration of life for Bill is to be held on Wednesday, November 20th, 2024 from 1:00pm to 4:00pm at the American Legion Post #92 in Stanwood.