



## Keith Bartlett Jefferts

May 10, 1931 - August 16, 2014

Keith Jefferts' life was characterized by three great passions: salmon, science, and piloting – both air and sea. Much of it was spent at the controls of airplanes, helicopters, and the Wily King – on the trail of the wily King Salmon. Salmon and science combined to characterize or define the latter half of his life, when he returned to the Pacific Northwest, took up residence on his beloved Shaw Island, and set about ensuring that there would always be salmon to catch and appropriate wine in his cellar to drink with them.

Together with boyhood friend and fisheries biologist Peter Bergman, he addressed the long-term survival of the salmon, engineering a means of identifying and managing various populations by tracking the lifecycle of members of particular populations, from California to Alaska. Keith and his team worked over the next decades to expand the technology to include salmon and other aquatic species across much of the globe.

Keith was born May 10, 1931, in Raymond, Washington to Iris Bartlett Jefferts and Sidney Charles Jefferts. He acquired a remarkably broad set of skills and interests from his father, who was a jack-of-all-trades, and his appreciation for education from his mother, a schoolteacher. His father may also have been the source of his passion for flight, as for many years, Sidney kept an airplane, hidden from his wife. Raised on a farm in Edmonds, Keith graduated from Edmonds High in 1949 and went on to earn a B.S. in Physics at the

University of Washington. From university, he went to the U.S. Naval flight school, flying first Douglas A1 “Skyraiders” and ultimately, most of the Navy’s inventory of jet fighters in service in the 1950s and 1960s, ending his military flight career in F8 “Crusaders”. He received several awards during his Navy service, including one for heroism in landing a disabled A1 “Skyraider” from which he should have ejected; doing so would have doomed the other person aboard, so Keith managed to land the badly damaged aircraft safely.

After completing his active duty tour, Keith remained in the Naval reserves, returning to the University of Washington where he completed a PhD in atomic Physics under Hans Dehmelt (Nobel Laureate, 1989), after presenting a thesis on the hyperfine structure of the H<sub>2</sub><sup>+</sup> molecule. Bell Laboratories, in Murray Hill, New Jersey, then became his research home for the next ten years. There, he became interested in radio astronomy and began a collaboration with radio astronomers Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson (Nobel Laureates, 1978) during which they discovered carbon monoxide in the Orion Nebula, contributing a fundamental component to the understanding of stellar dynamics – astrophysicists would ultimately learn that virtually all stars are formed in galactic molecular clouds similar to Orion’s. In the early 1970s, Keith and his then-wife Elaine formed Northwest Marine Technology (NMT) in order to assume control and begin production of the fisheries management tools Keith and Bergman had developed through the previous decade. Existing salmon tagging methods were insufficient to permit researchers to track the hatchery groups adequately and the population was declining. In 1974, the Boldt Decision was issued and Keith left Bell Labs to move the fledgling NMT to the Northwest. The new management methodology featured binary coded magnetic wire tags, harmlessly implanted in young salmon and recovered when the fish matured. Coded wire technology finally gave researchers the tools to track and manage a now-critical salmon population. More than a billion tags have since been implanted in salmon and other marine and animal species world-wide. [www.nmt.us/aboutnmt/history.shtml](http://www.nmt.us/aboutnmt/history.shtml)

Keith was an avid outdoorsman and early member of the Mountaineers and REI – backpacking trips in the Cascades and Olympics (always with a fly rod or two) were an omnipresent part of Keith’s graduate-school and early parenting years, and he continued those adventures with his children well into their adulthoods. Throughout the years at Bell Labs, each summer included a cross-country family haul to the San Juan Islands, first in Bellancas, and four kids and two dogs later, in a series of Cessna 195s, and, ultimately twin-engined Beechcraft, delivering a gleeful family to summers of outdoor joy. His children well remember the long hours between stops and challenging hours over the Rocky Mountains, yet nevertheless three of his children and his granddaughter are pilots. After he settled again in Washington, his work took him regularly to Alaska, up and down the Pacific coast, and around the world. In later years, he regularly flew a de Havilland Beaver into the interior of Alaska, British Columbia, and Washington in search of fish, solitude, and the occasional case of wine. He flew a variety of other civilian aircraft over the years, including a Citabria, Cessna 172, Mitsubishi MU-2, Socata TBM, and two helicopters. Keith amassed some 16,000 hours of flight time during his 65+ years of flying, including some 7000 hours of radial engine time – quite a feat for a pilot who never flew commercially.

After returning to Shaw, Keith made regular field research trips up and down the Pacific coast, discovering the beauty of Tenakee Inlet in southeastern Alaska, and making that his summer base for many years. Inspired by his friend and fishing partner Stan Moberly, he piloted a series of fishing boats (always named the Wily King) from Seattle each spring to Tenakee, a perfect base from which to oversee tagging and retrieval operations, travel to the Okanagan Valley’s burgeoning vineyards, and, of course, to fish for salmon and halibut.

In 1953, Keith married Elaine Ryan, also of Edmonds, and together they raised four children. Keith's son Steven, also a physicist, will forever remember the look on Keith's face when he performed his first gravitation experiment – jumping from a ladder at the second story while holding an umbrella as a parachute, or his first thermodynamics experiment, during which he penetrated the screen of Keith's oscilloscope with a Weller soldering iron. Katharine will never forget the summer he taught her to dive, the backpacking and flying trips, building a crystal radio with him at age 6 and learning from him to develop film. Ingrid's fondest memory is of Keith, smiling through his luxuriant handlebar mustache, while playing his Martin 00 and singing "Scarlet Ribbons" in his rich baritone. Erik will always remember the summertime backpacking and fishing trips that invariably began with provisioning at the original REI store on Capitol Hill.

Keith also believed in giving back. In 1984, he formed and funded the Fisheries Management Foundation, and he and Sue Jefferts founded HonorWorks, a nonprofit focused on healing the damage done through ignorance in the raising of children of all cultures. In 2005, Keith was honored by The American Fisheries Society Carl Sullivan Fishery Conservation award; the Western Division jointly recognized him and Pete Bergman with the Award of Excellence in 1985. Keith was also a fellow of the American Physical Society.

Keith is survived by his wife, Sue Hutchins Jefferts, brother, Kirk Jefferts, his children, Katharine (Richard Schori), Ingrid (John Berryman), Steven (Stefania Romisch), and Erik (Julie Howard), and stepdaughter Amy Bitzer (Jason Vance), grandchildren C. Allen Jefferts DeFranco, Kate Schori Harris (Aaron Harris), and Ethan Vance, and great-grandson Marcus Harris.

Farewell Tribute Information

Two services are planned to Celebrate Keith's Life.

A Celebration of Life will be held at 3:00PM on Saturday, September 6, 2014 at Moles Farewell Tributes, 2465 Lakeway Dr., Bellingham, WA.

A Celebration of Life will be held at 12:00PM on Saturday, September 13, 2014 at Shaw Island Community Center. Those attending the Shaw Island Celebration please check the ferry schedule.

#### Donations Information

Memorial donations may be made to HonorWorks.

# Tribute Wall

JR

“ I spent a few days on the Wily King with Keith and Stan a number of years ago, and they created a memory that I will never forget! So sorry to know that Keith is now gone, but he will never be forgotten by his Wily King crew.

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**Jerry Rasmussen** - August 16, 2014 at 12:00 AM

VH

“ We remember and give tribute to a remarkable man. Our love to his wife and condolences to his family.

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**Victoria and Kit Hinsley** - August 16, 2014 at 12:00 AM

PH

“ Dear Sue, Amy, Jason, and Ethan, Some time has passed now since Keith left the planet. I am thinking of each of you and sending you love. It must be strange to not have Keith physically there. But, I always thought his energy was bigger than life — and so his energy is definitely still there and with you. Much love to you, Patti

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**Patti Henry** - August 16, 2014 at 12:00 AM