



R. Bruce McGinnis

November 17, 1945 - December 10, 2020

Bruce McGinnis was born November 17, 1945 in Billings, Montana to Robert “Mac” and Doris McGinnis. Graduating from Billings High in 1964, he then went on to receive a degree from Rocky Mt. College and in 1972 received his Juris Doctor from The University of Montana. After graduating Bruce moved to Helena where he resided for 46 years. On Thursday, December 10, 2020 Bruce passed away in Bellingham, Washington after suffering a brain hemorrhage.

Bruce was a warm, kind and gentle man with a voracious appetite for learning and knowledge that stayed with him even as he battled Alzheimer’s the last few years of his life. He was a quiet man who didn’t boast of his achievements (of which there are many) but his impact was widely felt.

We have heard so many remarks from other people of individual moments with Bruce where he taught them lessons, shared stories or imparted wisdom that has stayed with them for years. These moments of impact are proof of just how much he embraced and enjoyed life and the people around him.

Bruce had a pretty typical childhood growing up in the 40’s and 50’s in Billings. He was a scout, attended Sunday school, loved mystery & adventure, liked to read, had an erector set, played football, kept bullies away from his little sister and poked his eye out.

As a teenager he spent a summer or two working at Yellowstone National Park with his closest mates, all of whom were once reprimanded for tricking tourists into believing they were valve operators who controlled the eruption timing at Old Faithful. It was also during this time that Bruce joined Demolay and found his place in the world with leaders and other great men of character. The Masonic order and the Brothers he found within the fraternity would help influence and dictate the man he would be for the rest of his life.

After graduation from University of Montana in 1972, Bruce found himself in Helena working for Chief Justice James T. Harrison where he served as Marshall of the Court until he moved onto the Department of Revenue – Liquor Division where he worked as an attorney and retired after 28 years of service to his home state of Montana.

In his early years in Helena, he was a referee for high school football, coached men's and women's softball and served as Softball Commissioner where he helped to facilitate the building of Batch Fields softball complex.

Bruce became an active, loyal and dutiful lifetime member of Helena Morning Star Lodge #5 & the Helena York Rite Bodies. He was Grand High Priest from 1999-2000, and Past Illustrious Grand Master from 2013-2014. He also enjoyed the honor of serving as Demolay Dad to E.C Day Chapter in 1986 in Helena.

Bruce met the love of his life Kitty Bartraw and her daughter Tami in Seattle on St. Patrick's Day. They were married in December of 1979 and he quickly adjusted to and delighted in his new roles as husband and father. In 1981 they welcomed a child together and Bruce fully embraced his role as a family man – which we are certain – he would consider one of his greatest achievements.

After retirement Bruce kept busy with his leadership roles as a Mason. Holding York Rite offices on both local and state levels gave him opportunities to make lifetime friendships with other Masons and travel with Kitty throughout the U.S., Canada, Scotland and even Ireland where Bruce had the opportunity to become a member of the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free & Accepted Masons of Ireland.

He also enjoyed volunteering with Grandstreet Theater, the Salvation Army and delivering meals to the underserved. Staying true to his fondness for Montana history, he became a tour guide at the State Capitol and Governor's Mansion. He also worked as a substitute teacher for middle and high school students.

Maybe one of the most overlooked things about Bruce is how much he enjoyed making people around him happy. He joined the Algeria Shrine and became part of the "Circus Patrol" where he was proudly known as "Klancy the Kop". He loved parading and tying balloons and was always bringing up the rear because he "wasn't done until the last kid left smiling."

Bruce's interests were varied, and he worked hard to instill the same passion for learning and knowledge in his children and his only grandson, knowing fully the benefits of providing them with learning opportunities through travel and experience. One of his fondest being a trip to London arranged by his daughter Tami where he was finally able to visit 221 B. Baker Street, The Old Bailey Court, The Tower of London and Westminster Abbey in person. He and Kitty enjoyed a trip to Scotland and then on to Ireland where they celebrated their anniversary on St. Patrick's Day.

Bruce loved to cook and bake and won a ribbon or two at the fair. He gave advice to anyone who asked for it and always had a well-researched or at

least well-rehearsed response to how and why the universe works the way it does for anyone who needed it. Until his final days Bruce remained a true friend and confidant to many people from many different walks of life.

Bruce will be greatly missed by many and is survived by his wife Kitty, his daughter Tami (Bartraw) Miller and her son Ryan, his son Sully and daughter-in-law Katie, sister Judy and her daughter Hannah, brother and sister-in-law Mick and Sandy along with many nieces, nephews, cousins and Masonic Brothers.

Due to Covid-19, services will take place at a later date in Bellingham, WA.

Those wishing to attend or offer condolences are encouraged to contact family at: mcginnisfamilyemails@gmail.com.

Memorial donations may be made to the Shriners Hospitals for Children — Spokane ([click here to donate](#)) or the Knights Templar Eye Foundation (1033 Long Prairie Rd. Suite 5 Flower Mound, TX 75022).

Tribute Wall

LM

“ *My thoughts & prayers are with Bruce's family . May your Faith, Family, Friends & Many Happy Memories help you in the month's to come.*

Linda Miles - February 03, 2021 at 12:00 AM

RD

“ *Kitty and Family
Sorry to hear about the passing of Bruce. Bruce and I had many enjoyable times in Lodge and York Rite. He was very devoted to his family and the Masonic Organizations
He will be greatly missed. Our thought and prayers are with you.*

Robert and Smithe Docktor - February 02, 2021 at 12:00 AM

KM

“ *I knew Bruce from Morning Star Lodge #5 from 2009 until the time he left. He was a friendly and kind man and I'm proud to have known him. I pray for your family during this time.*

Kyle McIntyre - January 31, 2021 at 12:00 AM

SK

“ *I attended Billings Senior High with Bruce. I was so pleased to read herein of the extraordinary amount that he achieved as he traveled through the years – and how much he gave to others throughout that journey.
Bravo, Bruce – here's to a life extremely well-lived.*

Susie Kasper - January 31, 2021 at 12:00 AM