Bill Morgan – 1934-2018

Bill Morgan

Bill Morgan, the former leader of the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit and Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, died April 14, 2018, at his home in Alpine County. He was 84.

In 1975, Bill was appointed the forest supervisor of the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, which the U.S. Forest Service had recently established to manage the federal government's landholdings with the goal of preserving the area's natural resources and Lake Tahoe's pristine water quality.

During his time at the LTBMU, he redirected the federal government's land management policy in the basin from one of timber management to one of restoration and recreation. He also helped manage the federal government's extensive land acquisition program in the basin. In 1965 only 47 percent of the basin was federally owned. This increased to 65 percent by 1980 to about 78 percent presently. One of the most significant land acquisitions made at that time was the purchase of two casino developments on the South Shore that Bill helped orchestrate to prevent their construction. Other acquisitions included Bliss/Shakespeare Point, Zephyr Cove, Round Hill Pines, and lands acquired under the 1980 Burton-

Santini Act. He was also instrumental in furthering the historic preservation of the estates near Camp Richardson.

It was during this period that the recently formed Tahoe Regional Planning Agency was struggling to develop its own land management program for public and private lands. Battered by opposing political forces and legal challenges from environmentalists and property right advocates, the agency was on the verge of being disbanded. Having accomplished much at Lake Tahoe with the U.S. Forest Service, Bill retired early from that agency to work for the TRPA, which he viewed as being critical to protecting Lake Tahoe's environment.

On April Fools' Day 1985 he assumed the position of executive director with the embattled organization with the charge of developing a new Regional Plan to end a 1984 court order that had imposed a moratorium on further development in the basin affecting private landowners of more than 15,000 vacant lots around the lake. As he took the helm, Bill formed a consensus building team to help guide the development of the plan. After two years of intense work, the plan was completed. On July 15, 1987, a federal judge lifted the building moratorium order after accepting the new TRPA Regional Plan that would guide land-use in the Tahoe basin for the next quarter century. Those who worked with Bill on the plan labeled him as "the right man for the time".

President Ronald Reagan and Sen. Paul Laxalt (who as governors of the states of California and Nevada earlier had created the TRPA) sent Bill personal notes of appreciation for his work in resolving the planning conflict.

When Bill retired from the TRPA on Sept. 30, 1989, he was given a piece of the original "consensus building table," which he fashioned into a coffee table that remained a fixture in his living room until the time of his passing.

Over the years, that table was the site of many more epic

battles between family and friends playing cribbage, poker, Jenga, and many other games.

It has been said that Bill's ideas resolved many of the long standing issues at Tahoe and led eventually to a spirit of cooperation among the various interest groups that survives to this day.

In 1990, Bill moved to Woodfords in Alpine County with his wife, Carole, where they designed and built a home, Memdewee Down. It was at this home overlooking the distant snow-capped peaks that he chose to spend his final moments. During his "retirement" years, Bill served on the Alpine County Planning Commission, Tahoe Rim Trail Association, and the Lake Tahoe Baikal Institute. He also worked as a consultant to the Russian government on Lake Baikal environmental issues on behalf of the U.S Agency for International Development shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

William A. Morgan was born March 16, 1934, in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., to Luella (Bell) and William C. Morgan. He was the youngest of three children, with sisters, Mary Lou (Blanchard) and Mildred (Galinski). Bill spent his early years growing up in Michigan's Upper Peninsula where he developed a passion for the natural environment. Hiking and canoeing with the Boy Scouts were two of his favorite activities. He earned the rank of an Eagle Scout.

At the age of 17, after graduating from high school, he and his high school buddies spent the summer trekking across Canada to Alaska on the crude roadway system that spanned the region, sleeping in the wide open spaces under the stars. This adventure further reinforced his love and respect for nature. Upon his return, he enrolled at Bay City Junior College.

Unsure of what he wanted to study, he left school after one year and enlisted in the U.S. Army for two years during the Korean War, leaving with the rank of sergeant. His time in the

military left him with an appreciation for the work of teams and for the sacrifice and devotion of service members. After his discharge, he returned home to Michigan and enrolled at Central Michigan University and later Michigan State University. It was at Central that he became reacquainted with a high school friend, Carole Punches, whom he married in 1957. Two years later, daughter Stacey (Foster) was born, and Bill graduated from MSU with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering.

Following college graduation, Bill joined the U.S. Forest Service as an engineer and moved with his young family to California where they were stationed first on the Klamath and then Angeles national forests. While stationed at the Angeles National Forest, sons Craig (1962) and Eric (1964) were born. In 1965, Bill and Carole moved the family to Grass Valley, where Bill served as the forest engineer for the Tahoe National Forest for 10 years.

In Grass Valley, Bill and Carole were active in the community, engaged with their church (Peace Lutheran, of which they were founding members), Boy Scouts, and their children's sports. Bill and family traveled extensively across the wilderness areas of the U.S., Mexico, and Canada camping, hiking and fishing.

Travel, writing, and fitness were also life-long passions of Bill's. He and Carole traversed the world, sometimes with friends, exploring North America, as well as Europe, Asia and Polynesia. But it was always the Sierra that they returned to as home. He wrote and published six books: five fiction and one (his last) a nonfiction account of his time with the U.S. Forest Service and the TRPA at Lake Tahoe. His writings reflect the landscapes and experiences of his life through a variety of genres including adventure, science fiction, memoir, and saga. He also was a past contributor to the *Record Courier*. A regular tennis player, hiker, skier, canoer, and snorkeler, Bill enjoyed all sports—especially those involving

his children and grandchildren. Up until the last weeks of his life, he was engaged in healthy and friendly competitive contests.

Throughout his life, Bill Morgan championed public access to the outdoors and wild spaces while ensuring the preservation of such spaces for future generations. He was a consummate problem solver and worked tirelessly to bring opposing interests together using consensus building techniques while developing win-win solutions.

He is survived by his wife Carole of 61 years, daughter Stacey (Martin Foster), sons Craig (Michaela) and Eric (Susan); grandchildren Riley Kennedy (Sean), Christian Foster, Alexandra Morgan, Jack Morgan, Max Morgan, Cameron Morgan, and Nicole Morgan.

A celebration of life will be at the Carson Valley United Methodist Church in Gardnerville on April 28, 2018, at 10am.

The family is sincerely appreciative of the love and care from members of the Carson Valley United Methodist Church and from Barton Home Health and Hospice (South Lake Tahoe). In lieu of flowers, the family asks that individuals consider supporting these organizations. The family has also established the William Morgan Foundation for Environmental Excellence to recognize and support services and activities that promote appreciation, access, and sustainability for natural spaces.