



John Robert Nelson

March 6, 1942 - January 23, 2022

Bob was born March 6, 1942 to Dwight and Dorothy Nelson in Wenatchee, Washington. He grew up in Ephrata, Washington, spending one year in Helena, Montana when his family moved briefly for a job opportunity. As a child and teen, he enjoyed playing football and other sports, and all activities in the outdoors. He had pet alligators named Elmer and Henry, which made for fun stories with his grandchildren later in life.

He graduated from Ephrata High School in 1960 and went on to enjoy a collegiate football career that took him to Washington State University where he played the 1960 and 1963 seasons, and Wenatchee Valley College where he was named to the JC Grid-Wire All-America First Team in 1962. He served in the United States Air Force from 1964-67 when he was honorably discharged and remained in the reserves until 1970. He took advantage of the GI Bill to finish his bachelor's degree in Biology at Central Washington University. Throughout his life he had the thrill of many successful hunts in the mountains of Washington State with dear friends, including a mountain goat hunt above Lake Chelan - a trophy that made the record books in Washington State.

In 1971 Bob married Mary Wickwire, the love of his life in their hometown of Ephrata where they raised four children. They celebrated their 50th anniversary on October 23, 2021. Throughout the years, Bob enjoyed hunting, fishing, camping with his kids and cheering them on in athletics and other life events.

In 1983, after spending 11 years working in the Seattle area for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bob and Mary returned to their hometown of Ephrata to raise their children near their grandparents. For most of his career Bob was a Hydro Electrician working for the Bureau of Reclamation at Grand Coulee Dam. He retired (for the first time) in 1997. Feeling too young to completely retire at age 55, he worked for Columbia Basin Hydropower at Summer Falls as a Power Plant Operator until finally retiring in 2014. The environment at Summer Falls was serene and had plenty of wildlife nearby for him to enjoy, and often his kids and grandkids would stop by to do some fishing.

Bob could often be seen working in his yard, which looked like a beautiful park from spring to snow fall. He had many dogs over the years and his beloved companion, Cooper was with him in his retirement until the day Bob passed away. Bob is survived by his wife Mary, his children Jenny Rickel (Mike) of East Wenatchee, Marc Nelson (Katie) of Pasco, Jeff Nelson (Sarah) of Ephrata and Lindsay Kane of East Wenatchee, and twelve grandchildren: Isaac Nelson, Hagen Nelson, Spencer Rickel, Max Nelson, Wes Nelson, Gracie Gorman, Adrianna Redstar, Kyndall Kane, Luke Nelson, Lettie Nelson, Lyza Kane, Audrey Kane and honorary grandchildren Daiva Mihelich and Lulu Nelson. Bob spent his retirement years attending as many of their activities as he possibly could, many weeks traveling hundreds of miles to see sporting events. He is also survived by his brother Russell Nelson, nieces Soraiya Wilkins and Shireen Hotchkiss (Gerald) and great nephews William and David Wilkins.

Bob was a kind and generous man who was devoted to his wife and family and made a lasting impact on their lives by encouraging them in all their endeavors. Due to his fondness for his time at WSU playing football, Bob raised a "Coug Nation," and you could often hear a "Go Cougs!" at family gatherings. The family was blessed to be together at Bob's side when he passed into the arms of Jesus on January 23, 2022 at their family home in Ephrata.

We will celebrate Bob's life and legacy on Friday, February 4, 2022 at St.

Rose of Lima Catholic Church (323 D St. SW, Ephrata) with viewing and rosary at 10:00am and Mass at 11:00am, followed by graveside service and a reception at The American Legion Hall (276 8th NW, Ephrata). Donations can be made to the Lewy Body Dementia Association at <https://www.lbda.org/donate/> or another charity of your choice in Bob's name.

Cemetery Details

Ephrata Catholic Cemetery

333 E St. SW
Ephrata, WA 98823

Previous Events

Mass of Christian Burial

FEB 4. 11:00 AM (PT)

St. Rose of Lima
323 D St. SW
Ephrata, WA 98823

Tribute Wall

LT

“ I was fortunate to work with and get to know Bob during his time with Columbia Basin Hydropower. He was a joy to be around. He was knowledgeable, got along with everyone, had a great sense of humor and was humble. He was a great influence on his coworkers with his combination of experience and personality. I will always appreciate the example Bob set and the opportunity to have known him.

My condolences to the family.

Larry Thomas

Larry Thomas - January 27, 2022 at 04:57 PM

JM

*One of my heros since 1954.
Bob and Mary have imprinted such a wonderful legacy that will live on for their kids, grandkids and many others. My condolences to Mary and all the family. John Molitor family friend.*

John Molitor - February 04, 2022 at 12:48 PM