

## **Frank B. Ridlon Jr. K5LVU**

**March 2, 1933 - July 13, 2017**

Frank Burleigh Ridlon Jr. was born at home in Yarmouth, Maine, on March 2, 1933, at the end of the Great Depression. He was the second of three sons and one daughter born to Frank "Burleigh" Ridlon and Elvina DeRoche Ridlon. His family called him "Brother"; folks in town soon knew him as Popeye. He spent most of his free time hanging out along the Royal River, swimming, fishing, skating, and exploring. His grandfather was a significant influence in his life. Frank was usually accompanied by his dog Dopey, who would pull his sled over the snow in winter. His memories include hunting and fishing trips with his dad and uncle, often to the Rangely Lakes area.

Frank attended North Yarmouth Academy, a private prep school, because the town had no public high school and so paid for local students to attend. He graduated in 1951; the next day he and four buddies enlisted in the service. Frank joined the Air Force, attended Air Force Technical School at Keesler AFB in Mississippi, and became an airborne radio operator as part of the Strategic Air Command, flying air refueling missions aboard KC-97s. He spent time at Randolph Field in San Antonio, TX; March AFB in Riverside, CA, and Murphy Dome in Alaska, among other sites. He was honorably discharged in 1960. He was married in 1953, and had three children, David, Donna, and Debbie. In 1959, while stationed in Mississippi, Frank obtained his Amateur Radio Operator license, and as K1LVU, became an active "ham radio" operator.

Frank worked on electronic test equipment for Hughes Aircraft in Los Angeles, and spent 1 ½ years on field assignment in Idaho on the Titan missile project. After his first marriage ended, he remarried, and added two daughters, Anne and Jennifer, to his family. He returned to the Riverside, CA area, and over the next 13 years worked as an electronic technician for Bournes, Inc. There he maintained electronic test equipment. During this time, Frank became involved in motorcycle racing at local tracks, often competing with riders 20 years his junior. He raced Flat Track and TT, and participated in the Elsinore Grand Prix. He also cultivated a love for country music, and played bass in a country band, the "So and So's", in local nightclubs.

In 1976, Frank found himself single again. He was introduced to a young kindergarten teacher on a blind date. Eight months later, on October 2, 1976, he and Louise Bensema were married in Pomona, CA, a partnership that was to last 40 years. As he often said, it seemed like he was always starting over, and about this time he began working for Dictaphone Corporation as a field service representative. He traveled around a three-county area servicing dictating and transcribing systems for customers.

Frank and Louise enjoyed the outdoors, and were involved in the local camera club. They took a backpacking class at Riverside City College, and soon began hiking in the Eastern Sierras above Lone Pine. They bought a house in Rancho Cucamonga, and in 1979, their son Brian was born. Frank was to change jobs yet again: in 1979 he went to work as a senior electronic technician for Safetran Systems Corporation, testing and repairing grade crossing predictors and motion sensor equipment on railroads; then in 1985 for Lockheed Aircraft Service Co., where he tested and repaired digital flight data recorders (aka "Black Boxes").

Frank enjoyed taking on new challenges. He had always wanted to fly, so he took lessons to obtain a private pilot's license. After a few flights in light aircraft, he decided to go even lighter, and pursued hang gliding for five years (beginning at age 50). He flew regularly off Crestline in the San Bernardino mountains. At age 55, he enrolled in SCUBA diving lessons, and was an assistant instructor for NAUI

classes. He made many dive trips to the Channel Islands off the Southern California coast, and to Ensenada and Cozumel, Mexico.

Frank retired from Lockheed in 1995. He enjoyed traveling on family camping trips, and spending time fishing and boating at an RV campground in Blythe, CA, then later from the family's mountain cabin in Twin Peaks, CA. He and Louise made many trips up the California coastline to Morro Bay to escape the summer heat.

Although a heart attack and other health issues curtailed some of Frank's activities, he continued to ride motorcycles (touring bikes, including a Gold Wing sidecar rig) and go on hiking trips. He climbed to the summit of Mt. Baldy and Mt. Langley, among other peaks. He shared his musical talents singing in the choir at Lincoln Avenue Reformed Church in Pomona, and sang and played bass in the church praise band.

In 2004, Frank and Louise traveled to Cedar Creek, TX, to visit sister Gwen. Louise was nearing retirement after 34 years teaching, and the open spaces and country life of Central Texas immediately appealed to them both. They soon bought a lot in Cedar Creek and made plans to relocate within the next year. It wasn't long before Frank was once again singing in the choir and playing bass in the church praise band at Cedar Creek United Methodist Church. Frank and Louise eventually formed a band, "Cedar Creek Revival", where Frank could croon country tunes to make the ladies swoon!

Learning about their new home was important, so Frank and Louise joined the Lost Pines chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists, and it wasn't long before they were involved in volunteer projects including trail work and maintenance, leading guided hikes, participating in plant and animal surveys, and teaching classes of fifth graders at the local state parks. They enjoyed many camping and birding trips in their new home state. Within the next few years, sons Brian and David and families followed the trail to Texas, and now all live within walking distance of one another. In the last three years, Frank has enjoyed having his children and grandchildren gather from all over the country for family reunions at the "homestead".

Frank was known for his warm smile, quiet confidence, and readiness to help in any situation. He loved life, exploring new experiences, and sharing stories. He loved his family, his animals, and his Lord, and was ready to go when God called him home after a series of health issues.

Frank Burleigh Ridlon, Jr. passed from this life July 13, 2017 at the age of 84. He will be sorely missed, but everyone who knew him would agree that their lives were made richer by spending time with Frank.

He was preceded in death by his parents and two brothers, Edward and Ronald Ridlon.

Frank is survived by his loving wife of 40 years, Louise Ridlon; 6 children, David Ridlon and his wife Rhanda, Donna Ridlon Smith, Debbie Walker and her husband Phil, Anne Ridlon, Jennifer Ridlon, Brian R Ridlon and his wife Jennifer; sister, Gwen Ridlon Bunnell and her husband Jerry; 11 grandchildren, Steven, Leila, April, Kristina, Leanne, David, Sierra, Anthony, Cory, Ashley, Kaleigh; 10 great-grandchildren and 1 great-great-grandchild. He is also survived by his special friends, Bart (the little lap dog), Miss Brown (the elderly grey and white cat), Tasha (the crazy Siamese rescue cat), Ferdinand (the little black sheep), and two miniature horses, Blue eyed Elaine and Shazaam.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to:

The Wounded Warrior Project, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Cedar Creek united Methodist Church or a charity of your choice, in honor of Frank B. Ridlon, Jr.

A Gathering of Family and Friends will be from 6:00pm to 8:00pm on Sunday, July 16, 2017 at Marrs-Jones-Newby Funeral Home in Bastrop, Texas. A Celebration of Frank's Life will be at 11:00am on Monday, July 17, 2017 at the Cedar Creek United Methodist Church.

*Marrs-Jones-Newby Funeral Home  
505 Old Austin Highway  
Bastrop, TX 78602-0745 512-321-2576*

*Thanks to David Ridlon & Ed W8EFG for informing us*



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