

William "Bill" VANDERMAY W7DET/W7ZZ

Radio/Television Pioneer Engineer Navy Officer Veteran Died June 6th In Portland, Oregon

Bill Vandermay, a pioneer Radio and Television engineer and a Navy reserve retired officer has died at the age of 86 from cancer.

He was born near Blaine, WA., the youngest of three brothers and three sisters. Raised in Lynden, WA., he attended Lynden High School and later the University of Washington. He was an athlete in Track & Field and set many records in the high-jump event, including a Washington state high school record that stood for 23 years and a U of W record that stood for 27 years, plus a number of other records. He was a member of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity.

His career in Radio started in 1934 as an engineer for KOMO-KJR radio in Seattle, later with KOMO and at the start-up of KOMO-TV and for many years as chief operations engineer. In 1961 he was transferred to Portland to become pioneer Chief engineer and manager of engineering for KATU where he was responsible for the supervision and installation of the original studio and transmitter facilities and for the engineering staff and organization when KATU went on the air in 1962. He was involved in station engineering operations for many years until his retirement in 1984. His duties included many ABC network activities, and was a venue engineer for the 1984 Olympics. His association with Fisher Broadcasting covered a span of 50 years until his retirement.

At age 15, he began a lifelong hobby as an Amateur Radio operator with a call sign W7DET, later to become W7ZZ. As a prominent "Ham" operator he specialized in world-wide communications (DX).

During his entire technical years he designed and constructed many radio and communications equipment. Several published articles.

At the start of WW2 he was commissioned an Ensign in the U.S. Navy. His duties started as Communications Officer for Navy Air Station, Seattle, eventually being assigned to the European theatre with duties as a communications officer in London, during the blitz, as well as a number of assignments leading to the D-Day Normandy invasion. He became the Communications Officer for the "Mulberry" artificial harbors project off Omaha beach during the D-Day invasion. He was later designated as Electronics Officer for France for the U.S. Navy, stationed in Paris for 14 months. He participated in many reserve post-war duties until his retirement as a Commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve.

He was twice married. He lived alone in his view home in Mt. Tabor area. He was a world-wide traveler and had many hobbies and projects as a genuine handy-man. As an ardent animal and bird lover he was always seen with a faithful dog at his side. His lifetime motto was "never a dull moment".

He is survived by his sister Minnie Vanweerdhuizen and a number of nephews and nieces in the area and by a special friend Lori Johnson. Disposition will be by cremation. Any contributions should be made to the Multnomah County Humane Society.

Published in print on 6/19/2003.

Seattle Times