

William Raymond Celander



William Celander Obituary

William (Bill) Raymond Celander

August 2, 1953-November 10, 2011

Bill Celander was born in Tampa, Florida, and grew up in St. Petersburg, where he graduated from Lakewood High and attended St. Petersburg Junior College until transferring to Florida State University. He graduated in 1979 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. While at Florida State, Bill studied abroad on FSU's Florence Program, an experience he would later mark as a high point in his life, one that began a life-long passion for Italy and for conversing in Italian—which he did with literally anyone, anywhere. His last trip to Italy was March 2010 to visit his oldest son, Clay, who had followed his father in attending the FSU Florence Program.

Bill married Karen Stockbridge in 1982 and had two sons, Clayton and Sean, of whom he was extremely proud. He was in awe of how bright they are, how hard they study and what fine young men they have become. Bill loved teaching his boys the ways of the workshop, which meant a great deal of fun: making swords, trebuchets, catapults, and science projects; encouraging moviemaking in the back yard; building a tree house and go carts. Clay is graduating from the University of Florida, and Sean recently enrolled at Florida State.

Bill was a people person, a genuine, warm man. He could talk with anyone because he had true empathy. He was gracious, loyal, and Karen's best friend and soul mate. Bill always encouraged Karen to do what she enjoyed—traveling with friends and the boys, pursuing interests whether mutual or not—the mark of a confident relationship.

To all who knew him, Bill was also known for his wonderful sense of humor and, throughout his life, his ability to translate that humor into cartooning. Bill's cartoons, in the form of professional work, doodles, or a myriad of cards made for family and friends, are still kept and treasured.

Bill began his career teaching ceramics at Le Moyne Art Foundation and working in the FSU Fine Arts Gallery. Later he worked at the Museum of Florida History in Tallahassee as a Curator of Exhibits, helping to create many of the permanent exhibits on display today. Bill's constant contributions demonstrated an impressive array of skills ranging from painting, illustration, and sculpture to concept, design, and fabrication.

After the Museum of Florida History, he started his own business, Bill Celander Studio, and continued to work on many museum projects (among other work), such as the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville, Mission San Luis in Tallahassee, and the George Washington House Museum in the Barbados. Among many other achievements, he designed the Florida Wild Flower Foundation license plate, annual posters for the Florida Archaeological Society, and artwork for many nonprofit organizations, such as Zoobilee (Tallahassee Museum) and the Southeastern Community Blood Center. In 2008, Bill did a series of conceptual drawings for the Museum of Florida History that were so well-received that they were a catalyst for the creation of a new exhibit, now in production, called "Forever Changed: La Florida, 1513-1821."

From his early days, another of Bill's artistic strengths was life drawing, and so he was a natural fit to don the hat of courtroom artist when something particularly dramatic or historic was happening. He was a courtroom sketch artist for such cases as the Florida Supreme Court ruling in the 2000 election, Bundy and Mallory Horne trials, among others.

Bill had a love of history, and this passion brought him to explore with his brother, Bob, his own family history, particularly researching and documenting their father's service in World War II.

He was also a fine craftsman and found great satisfaction whiling away hours in his workshop on whatever project 'spoke to him' that day. He dubbed his workshop/office 'Lunkerville' in honor of the lake he lived on and so loved: Lake Tom John. The whimsical name obviously honored the large bass (lunkers) he loved to catch (and, important to him, release unharmed). Bill, along with his sons and his brother, was an avid fisherman. He was active in Lake Watch and became known as 'the gate-keeper' for Lake Tom John through his monthly monitoring and testing of the water, adding of numerous fish attractors, enhancing habitats, and reporting anything of interest to all who lived on the lake.

Bill is survived by wife Karen Stockbridge Celander, sons Clay and Sean Celander, brother Robert Eugene Celander, Jr. (Bob), sister-in-law Margo Shand Celander (Dee Dee), nephew Robert Benjamin Celander (Bobby), and grandfather Jack Callan, all of Tallahassee. His late parents, Robert Eugene Celander, Sr., and Dona S. Celander, had retired to Tallahassee to be with their sons and their families. Other family members include cousins Jim Hansen and family and Charles Celander and family of Chicago, Illinois. Because Bill loved animals, it is important to note that he is also survived by their dog Belle and cat Chester.

Bill passed away after a brief illness. The family requests donations to ECHO in Tallahassee or to Wounded Warriors in lieu of flowers. A memorial service of his life, to be announced at a later date, will be held at his home after the holidays.