

# Dr. Marcus (Marc) A.M. Bell

With love and sadness, we – Heidi, Christine, and Marcus – share the peaceful passing of our father, Dr. Marcus (Marc) Bell, in Victoria, BC. A pioneer in ecology, a dedicated educator, and a man of boundless curiosity, Dad dedicated his life to understanding and protecting the natural world. He was a passionate family man, a caring friend, and an inspiration to generations of students. His life was a masterclass in living with purpose!

Born in Victoria in 1935, Dad grew up in Oak Bay. He was a bright student, skipping two grades and graduating from high school at the age of sixteen. However, his initial career path as an Anglican minister was short-lived. After doing “very poorly” in his first year of theology studies at UBC, he realized he was much more interested in the gospel of the Great Outdoors than the one from the pulpit. He earned his PhD in Forest Ecology in 1964 and eventually became one of the best-known ecology teachers in the province.

Dad’s greatest adventure began at Yale University where he was pursuing his Master’s degree. It was there he met Gerd Schønning, a schoolteacher from Norway who would become his wife and our mother. They married in Victoria on October 17, 1959, beginning a fifty-year partnership filled with adventure, love, and usually a few Labrador Retrievers. Together, they created a beautiful hobby farm in Saanich that became the heart of our upbringing. We produced fruits and vegetables, and raised livestock including the happiest chickens with the tastiest eggs. Mum and Dad also bred, raised, and showed Labrador Retrievers. It was a living ecosystem complete with rich compost, trees to climb, and a meadow filled with camas that bloomed each spring.

He went on to teach at the University of Victoria and was one of the founders of the Environmental Studies Program. He

inspired his colleagues with his balance of scientific rigour and human sensitivity. Dad was far from a traditional lecturer. He was a master of the “open-ended question”, often guiding students to their own intellectual breakthroughs by gently challenging them to think outside the box. In his humble fashion, he once said, “I learned more from my students than they ever got from me. What a deal!”

He didn't just teach his students in classrooms. Many nights us kids recall eavesdropping on the stairs close to our bedtime, watching generations of students gather in our living room for “chili nights” where environmental debates were fueled by spicy chili, homemade bread, and a crackling fire. He even had a knack for convincing his students to spend a few weekends at our small farm building a long cedar post fence – an “educational” experience they happily accepted in exchange for camaraderie, pizza, and a few beers.

For us, he never missed an opportunity to share something meaningful – whether gathered around the kitchen table, walking deep within a thick West Coast forest, or gazing up at the stars from our own backyard. He inspired us to seek out adventure and respect every culture we encountered. He taught us that a life well-lived involves getting your hands dirty – whether on our hobby farm with its rotating menagerie of animals, or exploring and respecting remote tribal villages in Indonesia and beyond.

His own adventures were wide-ranging, including canoeing the Stikine and Kitlop Rivers, bone fishing in the Christmas Islands, boating in the Gulf Islands, rafting the Grand Canyon, and foraging for mushrooms in the hills of Sooke. Wherever he found himself, Dad lived with contagious enthusiasm.

Dad was blessed to find a second chapter of happiness with his partner, Dr. Anne Fraser. He was warmly adopted by Anne's family, “The Fraser Clan”, in Nova Scotia, forming deep bonds

with Anne's children and grandchildren.

Even in his late 80s, Dad was still educating, leading natural history and ecology programs with Anne and colleagues at Yellow Point Lodge and in Tofino, sharing his passion for the natural world until the very end.

Dad leaves behind a forest of a legacy: his three children, Heidi Bell (Mickey Webster) Christine Neal (Donald Neal), and Marcus Bell (Teresa Hall); his seven grandchildren, Cameron, Carley, Mikayla, Trevor, Adam, Sava and Oliver, plus three great-grandchildren. In addition, he leaves his partner, Anne, and her family, as well as the thousands of students who are currently out in the world caring for the environment, in no small part due to his teachings and inspiration.

He was predeceased by his wife, Gerd, and his brother, Richard.

We imagine him now on a pristine river in the great beyond, fly rod in hand, finally finding out if there's a Latin name for the trees in heaven.

Deep gratitude is extended to caregiver Lheeza, family friend Arlene, and the wonderful staff at Veterans Health Center in Broadmead for comforting him in his final days.

In honour of Dad, donations may be made to the **Marc Bell Scholarship in Environmental Studies** at UVic (<https://extrweb.uvic.ca/donate/marc-bell>), supporting the next generation of environmental restorationists he was so passionate about. Or to the Veterans Health Centre at the Veterans Memorial Lodge ([www.broadmeadcare.com](http://www.broadmeadcare.com)).

A celebration of life will take place on Friday May 1, 2026, from 2:00 – 4:00 pm in the Sequoia Centre at McCall Gardens, 4665 Falaise Drive, Victoria, BC.

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

McCall Gardens

[www.mccallgardens.com](http://www.mccallgardens.com)

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