



# William McLain

JUL 28, 1927 - APR 9, 2024



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## **William McLain**

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**W**illiam Roy McLain was born July 28 1927, at Tacoma General Hospital in Washington. Bill graduated from Lincoln High School in 1945 and joined the Navy, serving in the WWII Pacific Theatre on an attack transport and later in Panama on an attack tugboat.

Bill used his GI bill to attend the University of Puget Sound in Washington. He met his wife, Jean, a Lincoln senior, they fell in love and were married January 24, 1948. Pursuing their dream, they traveled to Los Angeles, where Bill studied to be a disc-jockey at the Hollywood School of Broadcasting.

Bill's first DJ and sports casting jobs were at KXLE, Ellensburg, WA, KYAK, Yakima, WA, and KTNT, Tacoma. He moved over to KTNT-TV when it was on the air as Washington's second TV station. Bill soon became the producer/host of the popular 'Brakeman Bill' children's show that ran from 1955 to 1975. At the time, it was America's longest running kid's show.

Watching Brakeman Bill and his puppet pal, Crazy Donkey, became a favorite daily pastime for many children, some of which were "latchkey kids" before the term was coined. Their comedy rapport was popular with young and old alike. The show had fan clubs at local colleges and even a logging camp! Best of all, they were funny and lovable with not one off-color remark spoken EVER.

Later in the 1970s, 'The Brakeman Bill Show' was syndicated and became popular in Eastern Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and British Columbia. Over 5,000 shows were aired live and unscripted for 20 years. Sadly, only five minutes of the final show was recorded. In addition, Bill performed comedy magic at over 2,000 stage shows, mostly benefiting local PTAs.

When 'The Brakeman Bill Show' ended in 1975, Bill moved into management at Channel 11 KTSW for another 20 years. He was the station's spokesperson and public relations director, advertising and marketing director, and director of community relations. Bill also was a 12-time



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local host of the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon. During his 40-year TV career, Bill served on both the Pierce County and King County Sheriffs Advisory Boards and the Governor's Council on Child Abuse and Neglect. Nationally, he served on the Board of Directors of the Muscular Dystrophy Association, United Cerebral Palsy Association, American Federation of Television Artists, Broadcast Promotion Association, and many local civic organizations.

On March 5, 1993, his broadcast peers saluted his career by voting Bill into the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Hall of Fame.

Before and after his retirement, Bill and Jean were fortunate enough to enjoy world travel. Since 1962, they also spent many vacations entertaining as dance instructors on cruise ships. Bill especially enjoyed winter golf in the sunny Palm Springs area. He was also a prolific and accomplished watercolor painter.

Bill and Jean raised their daughter, Sandra, and son, Richard, and attended Christ Lutheran church where they became members in 1963.

Bill passed away on April 9, 2024. He will be greatly missed by his family, friends, and fans - we loved him dearly.



## Tribute Wall

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**Bryan Lowe** posted:

I so appreciate you and what your brought to your TV show so many years ago.

April 27 at 3:26 PM



**Jerry Anderson** posted:

We loved Brakeman Bills shows. He was a local that was very approachable and kind. We will miss Brakeman Bill. Thank you for all the memories!!!

April 15 at 3:35 AM



**Barb Monroe** posted:

I watched Brakeman Bill everyday as a child. He was a part of my upbringing teaching me to do the right thing. I was on his show as a Bluebird. He and JP Patches helped raise me. Well done, Brakeman Bill. May you rest in eternal peace.

April 12 at 3:10 PM



**Michael D Bogar** October 8 at 11:20 PM

Many of us in the Northwest found many hours of entertainment with Brakeman Bill Mclain. Thank you sir! May your soul rest and find reward on the other side of the cosmic tapestry.



# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring William by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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