

Ellsworth “Butch” Amundson's obituary



It is with saddened hearts that we announce the passing of my father Ellsworth ‘Butch’ Amundson, on December 19, 2023. Born on March 21, 1944, in Vicksburg Mississippi to his parents Ellsworth M. Amundson and Mildred Chisholm. Butch lived a full, vibrant life of adventure with his dearly beloved wife Wanida. His spirit, charm, and sense of humor left an indelible mark in the hearts of all those he encountered in life.

Butch started his life in Vicksburg where he was born, then travelled with his parents due to his father's Army assignments to Park Forest Illinois, Fayetteville North Carolina, then New Port News Virginia where he graduated high

school from St. Stevens and went to college at Virginia Tech where he majored in agriculture. Upon graduation he joined the Peace Corps because he wanted to see the world and help those who were less fortunate. He accepted an assignment to Nepal where he gained an appreciation for humanity, foreign worlds and which made him realize the person who he wanted to become. 'I felt my contribution to the Nepalis had been so small compared to what they had given to me'. After his assignment he returned to Washington D.C. where he decided to enroll and was accepted to Georgetown University's International Affairs graduate program. Within only a few days he met Wanida 'the most beautiful girl in the world' who was enrolled in the linguistics program on a Fullbright Scholarship and who he fell in love with immediately.

At the time the Vietnam war was heating up. Butch decided to cut his Master's program short and take the opportunity to work as a civilian through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Vietnam. After months of courting and moving into an apartment together in Rosslyn he and Wanida decided they wanted to spend the rest of their lives together. They were married at the Thai Embassy in D.C. and St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Arlington Virginia, both attended by his Peace Corps friends and his cousin Mary Alyce who represented the Amundson family for their nuptials. As Butch headed over to Vietnam to support refugees Wanida would finish her degree at Georgetown and travelled back to Bangkok to stay with her parents and to be close to Butch so they could visit each other occasionally. Sometime later their son Eric was conceived and born in Bangkok, Thailand.

From there he started his career as a Foreign Service Officer with posts in Tunisia, Yemen, Djibouti, Cameroon and Morocco. Each assignment was a cultural adventure for Butch, Wanida and Eric who would meet so many lifelong friends along the way that we are still in contact with today. Besides exploring the assigned countries they would return to visit his parents and relatives in Sacramento and her parents and relatives in Thailand. Eventually they bought their first home in McLean Virginia where Eric went to elementary school through his sophomore year. Butch and Wanida received their next assignment to West Africa and Eric went to boarding school in Switzerland. As Eric graduated and went on to College at James Madison University, Butch and Wanida's last assignment was in Morocco, a beautiful country that was the perfect dovetail for his career. Butch retired in his early fifties from USAID then both he and Wanida decided to buy a second home in Lake Tahoe Nevada to be closer to relatives and enjoy everything Tahoe had to offer including Butch's love for skiing. Butch's other passions were tennis, scuba diving and astronomy all of which he picked up during their assignments and travels overseas.

Butch and Wanida eventually decided to move back to their home in Virginia. They celebrated Eric and Fay's wedding and joyously welcomed their beloved Grandchildren Ethan and Clara into the world. They enjoyed spending time with Fay's parents and relatives. Butch found a new passion in doing extensive Amundson family genealogy research that included detailed ties to relatives in Wisconsin and Norway culminating in two reunions in both locations. Over the years Butch, Wanida, Eric and Fay would occasionally travel together passing down the love of culture, food and history to Ethan and Clara. Butch's favorite trip of all time was to southern France to celebrate his and Wanida's 50th anniversary along with Eric and family.

Eventually the love of his life Wanida passed away January 19th, 2023. Butch returned to her loving arms 11 months later on December 19th. Their love and legacy will continue to live on forever.

Butch is survived by his son Eric, his daughter in law Fay, his grandchildren Ethan and Clara, and his cousins Carol Graeber, Cecil Roumage, Doug Gayner, Suzanne Werner, Susie Wheeler, Jim Amundson, Clark Absher and their families.

He will be remembered as the good son he was to his parents, a loving and caring husband to Wanida, a fantastic father and father-in-law to Eric and Fay, an amazing Grandfather to Ethan and Clara, and a great friend and supporter to all whom he has touched in his life.