

# FORMER NATIONAL FMDA PRESIDENT DEAD AT AGE 87

Bill Ping passed away quietly just after Taps and lights out at the Memory Care Ward, VA Hospital, West Los Angeles on Tuesday, January 12, 2016 .

William A. Ping "Bill" was born in Kentucky on Christmas Day, December 25, 1929. His mother unfortunately passed away while giving birth to Bill . He had no siblings and not much is known about Bill's early years or just how he was raised but it is known that he joined the United States Marine Corps and the Corps and its traditions became his family.

Bill joined the Marine Corps Reserve in 1950 at the age of twenty. Before he could get to boot camp North Korea invaded South Korea and the war was on. Bill's Marine reserve unit was immediately activated and sent to Korea. Bill was one of many, during that time, that did not go to a traditional boot camp. He received his **boot training aboard ship** and the Marines were reassigned to 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division Regiments upon their arrival to Korea.

Bill was assigned to I-3-1 as a rifleman. He was at the Chosin Reservoir, was wounded, and promoted to Corporal before returning home.

Bill had several jobs before going to work at the General Motors Plant , Van Nuys , California where he stayed and finally retired. He worked along side former Marines like Al Kinsley, Bob Martinez and many others who had also earned the Eagle Globe and Anchor.

He was married several times, the exact number will never be known for sure. But we know he had no children associated with his marriages or siblings and no living relatives .

After retiring from General Motors Bill became very involved in the First Marine Division Association (FMDA) both at the Chapter and National Level. He served as President of the Los Angeles County Chapter, Inc., 1st Marine Division Association from 1987-1989 and mentored many of us through the Chairs within the Chapter. During his time as Chapter President he formed a bond with the Korea Marines Association of Los Angeles and fostered a relationship that is still in place to this day. He built the Chapter membership to over 500 members with an **active membership** in the hundreds. It was not uncommon to see our LA Chapter event attendance at 100 and our annual Christmas party at 300+ . Bill also served as Deputy Vice President, Western Region of the FMDA and made it a point to visit every Chapter during his tour.

He was elected as National President FMDA in 1991 and during his two year term joined and visited all 52 chapter in the Association. He set a standard that was matched by just a few like Tom Vetter and Gordon Morgan.

Bill served as LA Chapter President from 1987-1989 and went on to become the National FMDA President from 1991-93. In 1998 Bill moved to the Palm Springs Area and soon found himself starting a Chapter of the Association that would become one of the most active Chapters in the Association today, the Desert Cities, Mitchell Paige, Medal of Honor Chapter.

Bill was the Chapters Founder and the first President of that Chapter . In 2000 he fostered and developed a close relationship with Marine Corps Base 29 Palms, CA . He spoke frequently at Marine Corps, Air Ground Combat Training Center, 29 Palms . Today a solid program that supports the Marines and their families is firmly in place.

Although his commitment with the FMDA kept him busy Bill was a Life Member and supporter of the American, Legion, Veterans of Foreign War, Marine Corps League, Chosin Few, just to name a few. He was a strong supporter of the Bodfish Chapter and always had a plan to help the chapter make a couple of bucks. Calling upon his dear friend Al Kinsley and his painting talents to help him with that quest.

Perhaps he will be best remembered by many standing at the rear of his car with the trunk open at Chapter events selling Marine Corps emblematic items . It was "**Hey Marine! Come here. Give me five bucks, look here (pointing at his open trunk) and saying, pick out anything on the left side. 10.00 for items on the right side**". The sale of the items never went to benefit him. He always gave it to the Chapter. Bill Ping was a very caring and generous man and a great Marine.

Bill began showing stages of Alzheimer's some six years ago. Not real bad at first but each year it became painfully noticeable that he could not remember his friends, but never forgot that he was a Marine.

I recall speaking with Bill about four years ago on the phone. When he answered I told him who I was and after a short pause he said "Dale Turner? Dale Turner is dead" . It took me twenty minutes to assure him I was alive and not calling from the beyond. After a very enjoyable conversation, he asked again who I was, and again I told him and he replied, "Can't be, he's dead".

His friend and VA appointed conservator Ms. Snooky Levin said although he really didn't remember people these past three years he always had a smile and a kind word for those he met, especially for the ladies.

Bill will be cremated and interned at the Riverside National Cemetery. No date has been set as yet. I will keep you posted as information becomes available.

Just like those who have gone before him stories will be told of Bill that will bring many a smile to those who remember him. He is now with his brothers in Heaven ... Until we meet again ,God Bless you Bill, Semper Fi Marine.

