

William F. "Bill" Schmitz lived a life shaped by family, service, curiosity, and a strong sense of responsibility. He was an Air Force officer, a professional Scout, an educator, a world traveler, a husband of 63 years, a father, and a grandfather.



Bill died on September 30, 2026, at the age of 86.

Born December 3, 1939, in Poughkeepsie, New York, Bill was the son of Frederick Schmitz and Florence Konsier Schmitz. He grew up alongside his big sister, Ruth, and became an Eagle Scout as a young man, beginning a connection to Scouting that would continue throughout his life.

Bill attended Wagner College on Staten Island, where he earned a degree in education. During those years, he was also building a relationship with Margaret "Peggy" Kerr, whom he had met when they were young. They married in 1963 and soon began a life together that would take them far from their roots in New York's Hudson Valley.

After college, with the Vietnam War underway and the draft looming, Bill chose to join the United States Air Force. He served for 22 years, including service during the Vietnam War, rising to the rank of Major and earning the Bronze Star for distinguished service.

The Air Force took Bill and Peggy across the United States and around the world. Their assignments included Montana, Germany, North Carolina, and New York, as well as remote assignments for Bill in Thailand and Korea. Along the way, they welcomed their son, Brian, and daughter, Heidi.

Military life also began a lifelong love of travel. Bill and Peggy explored Europe while living in Germany and continued traveling for much of their marriage. Bill remained curious about the world throughout his life and took great pleasure in seeing new places and learning about their history.

When Bill retired from the Air Force in 1984, he began a second career with the Boy Scouts of America as a District Scout Executive. In that role, he worked with Scout units, volunteers, and community organizations to strengthen local Scouting programs and bring Scouting to more young people.

For Bill, though, Scouting was always more than a profession. A proud Eagle Scout himself, he once wrote, "I joined the Boy Scouts of America as a kid and never left." He remained involved throughout his life, including staffing National Scout Jamborees and continuing to volunteer long after his professional Scouting career ended.

Later in life, Bill returned to the field he had studied in college. For more than a decade, he worked as a substitute teacher at Hess Elementary School near his South Jersey home. He enjoyed working with young people and brought the same sense of service and responsibility to the classroom that had shaped his earlier careers.

That sense of service extended into the rest of Bill's life. He was active in his church and community, proud of his country, and believed strongly in the responsibilities that came with citizenship. He was also a lifelong student of history, with a particular interest in his German heritage and the generations of family who came before him.

Bill was independent, organized, curious, and determined. He could be demanding, particularly when he believed something needed to get done, but he cared deeply about the people and communities around him. He believed in commitments, education, hard work, and leaving things better for the people who came after him.

Above all, Bill was devoted to his family.

He and Peggy shared 63 years of marriage, building a life together through military moves, career changes, travels around the world, and eventually retirement in South Jersey.

He was deeply proud of Brian and Heidi and the families they built. He was enormously proud of his four grandchildren.

Bill is survived by his wife, Margaret "Peggy" Kerr Schmitz; his son, Brian Schmitz, and his wife, Stephanie; his daughter, Heidi Newman, and her husband, Jim; his grandchildren, Katherine, Connor, Maddie, and Jimmy; his sister-in-law, Edie Whalen; and his nephew, Greg Whalen.

He was predeceased by his parents, Frederick Schmitz and Florence Konsier Schmitz, and his big sister, Ruth Schmitz.