

## Obituary

**Died:** Saturday, March 31, 2012

FLORENCE - William H. "Bill" Free of Florence passed away at the Bitterroot Valley Living Center in Stevensville on March 31, 2012, after an extended illness.

Bill was born to Albert and Rosalee Free in Missoula on Jan. 31, 1926. He grew up in Woodworth, Mont., attending middle school there and high school in Missoula. Bill enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1943 and served his country during World War II. He was honorably discharged in 1946. He then attended Reed College in Oregon.

Bill married Lenora Scruggs in 1946 and settled in Portland, Ore. They had two children, Michael and Monica, and were later divorced.

He married Harriet Elberson in 1968 and they moved to Deer Lodge.

Bill started his career in the logging industry after finishing school. He worked for a number of timber operations before he and Harriet started Bill Free Logging Co. in 1972. He was a prominent logger throughout western Montana and Idaho for many years and was a member and past president of the Montana Loggers Association. He had a tremendous work ethic and his business was successful.

Bill retired from the woods in 1995 and was able to pursue his passion: riding and training Missouri Fox Trotter horses. He and Harriet participated in many shows through the years. He won a world championship in the Fox Trotter Modeling event in 1994 at the National show in Ava, Mo. He was a skilled trainer and avid competitor, always placing high and having many grand champion ribbons and trophies.

He was a member of the MFTBA and was inducted into the Missouri Fox Trotting Horse Breed Association Hall of Fame in Ava in 2005. His other hobbies included hunting, fishing and stock car racing.

Bill is survived by his wife Harriet Free of Florence; son Michael Free of Lolo; daughter Monica Page of Missoula; stepson Bill Elberson of Gillette, Wyo.; stepdaughters Connie Emery of Billings and Randeen Nelson of Eugene, Ore.; grandchildren Ira and Jenifer; and numerous great-grandchildren. Bill was preceded in death by his parents and sister Jeanette.

Bill will be missed by his family and many friends.

At Bill's request, no services will be held.

Read more:

<http://missoulian.com/news/local/obituaries/william-h-bill->

[free/article\\_ed047a70-7cc8-11e1-82f9-001a4bcf887a.html#ixzz1r5roH6Ud](http://missoulian.com/news/local/obituaries/william-h-bill-free/article_ed047a70-7cc8-11e1-82f9-001a4bcf887a.html#ixzz1r5roH6Ud)

## Service Summary

- Service details not available -