



## William Louis Vieth

December 31, 1981 - June 11, 2025

William Louis Vieth, a fiercely independent outdoorsman, ecologist and philosopher who was determined from day one to live life on his own terms, left this world on June 11, 2025. He was 43.

Will died from natural causes at his home outside Laporte, Colorado. He had been struggling in recent years with adult-onset epilepsy and other health issues.

Will packed a lot into his foreshortened life. He was a world traveler, a dedicated conservationist, a wilderness rescue volunteer, a devoted dog guardian, and a critical thinker who relied on his own logical analysis rather than conventional wisdom.

“So long as I find myself part of this strange thing called life, I plan to squeeze every last drop of living from it,” he once wrote in a personal journal.

Will earned dual diplomas from Colorado State University: a Bachelor of Science in Forest and Rangeland Stewardship, and a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy. He was working toward a master’s degree in ecology and economics at the time of his death.

He was Rivers and Forest Program Manager for Wildlands Restoration

Volunteers until his seizure disorder made it impossible for him to keep working in the wild. One of his goals was to launch his own ecology nonprofit.

Will was a reserved man who eschewed sentimentality. Yet he was generous and loyal to his small circle of close family members and friends. Even as his own cash reserves dwindled, he took in his niece and her growing family when they moved to Colorado earlier this year.

He was born New Year's Eve 1981 in Oklahoma City. By the time Will graduated from high school, the family had moved from Oklahoma to Texas, California and Virginia. Perhaps that set the tone for his nomadic lifestyle, one that took him to multiple domestic and foreign destinations.

While completing his degrees, Will finagled a semester abroad in Tasmania. He then spent many months trekking through Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, Laos, Nepal, and India. He stayed for 12 days in a Buddhist monastery, where he practiced silent meditation and slept on a concrete floor with a wood block for a pillow.

Will's studies gave him a deep reverence for the interconnectedness of all living things. One close friend recalled that on nature walks, Will would pluck leaves from plants and chew them. He said he wanted to use all his senses to get to know the species he was studying.

While traveling abroad, Will earned five scuba diving certifications, including the professional-level Divemaster. After his return to Colorado, he received multiple certifications in advanced wilderness search and rescue skills. He was a member of the Larimer County Dive Rescue Team.

His specialty at Wildlands Restoration Volunteers was wildfire and flood mitigation. After the Cameron Peak Fire swept through Northern Colorado in

2020, Will organized teams of volunteers who reseeded burned hillsides and controlled erosion on scoured riverbanks. He organized groups of sawyers who thinned unburned forests so future fires would not be as severe. The New York Times sent an environmental reporter to Northern Colorado to chronicle WRV's mitigation work.

His constant companion in recent years was Cobber, an exuberant retriever-terrier mix he rescued as a puppy. (Cobber is an Australian nickname meaning good buddy.) Will spent countless hours training Cobber to behave himself impeccably at home and accompany Will safely in the wilderness. "Dogs are people too," he often remarked.

Will is survived by his parents, Warren and Kathy Vieth; his sister, Sarah Nelson, and her husband, Brandon Nelson; his niece, Kylah Rojas, and her husband, Fernando Rojas; his great-nephews, Kassian and Lucas Rojas; and his ex-wife, Mollie Baker.

The family is determined to keep Will's legacy alive by supporting organizations that do the kind of work he loved. We request that any memorial donations be made to Wildlands Restoration Volunteers. <https://www.wrv.org/>

# Tribute Wall

DS

“ Will - I and others of your former volunteer crew members learned of your passing last night at the end-of-season WRV appreciation dinner. It was a shock. But I want you to know you were appreciated! I enjoyed working with you. Thank you for all you contributed to improving this planet.

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**Doug Swartz** - December 12, 2025 at 04:04 PM

CH

“ Oh man, I am so sad to hear about Will's passing. I worked with Will in the Restoration Ecology Lab at CSU. We shared many adventures in the field and the lab. I will always remember Will as a thoughtful, witty, hard-working, and great human to be around. Will was able to crack a smile even during some of the hardest working conditions and he was an amazing person to have an insightful conversation with. I was definitely sad when we parted ways and he went on to his adventures abroad, I haven't spoken with him since. Will was an absolute gem of a human and I'm very thankful that I had the privilege and pleasure of getting to know him and spending time with him in the field. Will - I hope you have peace among the pastures in heaven.

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**Chris Herron** - August 05, 2025 at 05:56 PM

MH

“ Billy (Sorry - I knew him for too many years as "Billy" to accept his name change to "Will" later in life :) was kind, sharp, and fearless. I never heard him say an unkind word about another fellow human. When I moved away from everyone I knew to work in California, he would come visit me even if it meant traveling 2000 miles. He would consistently call me throughout the years to check up on my life and maintain our friendship, even though I didn't always reciprocate. He was one of the smartest, wittiest people I knew. Conversation was always a joy - intellectually challenging and hilarious. He introduced me to Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy(!) and many other things I love. He was just completely unafraid to march by the beat of his own drum and follow the call of adventure. His self-confidence and bravery is personally inspiring and I hope I'm a little bit more that way from witnessing his example.

He gave me a lot in his too-short time on this Earth. I'm sad that he's gone but am so fortunate to have known him.

A donation has been made in his memory to Wildlands Restoration Volunteers

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Michael Hein - July 03, 2025 at 06:02 PM

JY

“ Will and I had a similar upbringing with the same favorite video games, music, and a curiosity and love for life, nature, mixed with a little bit of chaos. I will always remember the video game sessions, loud raucous noisy gatherings (sorry Kathy/Warren!), and great talks in parents' basement. I met a bunch of my other good friends through Will I will never forget his friendly and caring nature. I don't think I would be the same person today without having met him. He truly lived life to his fullest and will never forget the great (and hard) times with him.

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Jesse "Sushi" Yowell - June 30, 2025 at 03:36 PM

KM

“ Warren & Kathy, Our hearts go out to you. We are so sorry. Will left this earth better than he found it and that's an inspiration to us. Kay & Tom

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**Kay & Tom McCarthy** - June 30, 2025 at 03:28 PM

MC

“ I worked alongside Will as Program Manager at WRV and I always appreciated his generous spirit, his friendly nature and his uniquely out of the box thinking. Will always had a different perspective that is so valuable when working to make change on a minimal budget. His dedication and kindness will be missed.

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**morgan crowley** - June 30, 2025 at 12:19 PM

BS

“ The world lost a really good one. I met Will around 2006 in ASCSU, as we were both senators. Both of us being a little older than the college aged student we naturally gravitated toward one another and spent many nights having a pint, and when I was looking for a roommate, Will moved in. We lived together for about a year, and he was one of the best roommates a person could ask for.

The next year in ASCSU, I was the Chief of Staff and he was the Director of Environmental Affairs, a position he envisioned and created. He started a composting program at CSU that is still very much alive today!

He took off for a study abroad program in Tasmania but we stayed in touch and then he adventured all through SE Asia and the Pacific. I always loved when we reunited because we could share drinks and stories for hours! My favorite of his was when he was smuggling booze onto a small island in Indonesia, and dating a local girl and when the town found out they were coming for him and he slipped out under the dark of night to never be seen again. He told it way better than me but that was the gist.

Will was always the first person to come help you move, which is almost all you need to know about what kind of guy he was, when I had moved back to Fort Collins in 2020, he helped me move twice! The past couple years have been rough as he dealt with health complications and a divorce, but we still talked often. I recently moved to Laporte less than a mile away from him. The last few months were busy so I sadly didn't get to spend as much time with him as I would've liked, but I did see him a couple times, once for a walk we took and once when I was passing by on a run I stopped and chatted for a few minutes. I was looking forward to spending more time with him once I got back from my most recent adventures, so it was quite a shock to hear he had passed while we were away.

You will be missed my friend. Rest in Power!

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Benjamin Schrader - June 29, 2025 at 05:54 PM

KR

*Im his niece Kylah. We are the family the lived right next to him. We will soon be moving but I'd love to connect to know more of all his old stories ❤️*

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**Kylah Rojas** - June 29, 2025 at 08:38 PM

JM

“ *My most sincere condolences on your loss. I worked with Will on the Larimer County Dive Rescue Team. It was my privilege to write a letter of recommendation for Will pertaining to a job overseas.*

*It was a pleasure to work with Will and I'm so sorry that he's no longer with us.*

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**Jim Macqueene** - June 27, 2025 at 10:15 PM