



William "Matt" Hilliard

May 17, 2016

William Matthew "Matt" Hilliard, age 41, Lake City, Florida passed away Wednesday, May 11, 2016 in Gainesville, FL following an extended illness. Born January 29, 1975 in San Angelo, Texas to William (Mike) and Debra (Debbie) Hilliard.

Matt was a 1994 graduate of Bullard High School, Bullard, Texas; 2005 graduate of JSO BLE academy.

Matt's work included Sky Ranch, Van, Texas; Bicycles, Etc., Jacksonville, FL; and Baker County Sheriff Office as Deputy Sheriff.

Matt proved himself to be quite the outdoorsman, completing the Outward Bound survivalist course, a 14 day endeavor pitting man against nature. Matt competed in semi-pro mountain biking for a decade with several well-known sponsors, one of which was Wal-Mart. He boasts of the race in which he competed along-side Lance Armstrong.

He enjoyed the solitude and beauty of the North Florida forests and the discovery of its many secluded ponds and waterways. Fishing or just riding the trails, Matt enjoyed spending hours in the forest. He recently found a new love in free diving the area springs.

But nothing could top the love of his country, Texas. Friends and family were routinely treated to his tales of the glorious land of Texas. Once you met Matt it became quite clear he was the "way too proud of Texas" guy. His pride of Country comes naturally as he is an eighth-generation Texan whose heritage dates back to The Republic of Texas. Viva la Tejas!

In 2014 Matt found the organization H4H (<http://www.huntingforheroes.org/>) through social networking. This charitable organization had quite the positive impact on Matt. Their ability to connect Matt with other law enforcement personnel that could relate to the struggles of a job-related injury or disability gave him hope and purpose. Their motto is "Taking Care of Our Own". Matt became an active part of their peer counseling network.

By all appearances Matt was a tough guy but those who knew him best knew his four girls could cause him to melt like the candy always found in his pockets. He was so proud of each of his girls and cherished each and every moment he got to spend with them. His face lit up with joy each time he spoke to them. As their father he tried very hard to instill in them good manners, respect, and integrity. He taught them to be independent and how to defend themselves. But most of all to be truthful and to love one another. Matt's love and devotion for Kari was undeniable. He told many friends that Kari was the best thing that ever happened to him and that he never knew true, unconditional love until he met her.

Matt is survived by his devoted and loving wife, Kari Hilliard of Lake City, FL; his children Sara Kaitlyn, Natalie, Emily and Caroline Hilliard of Keystone Heights, FL; parents Mike and Debbie Hilliard of College Station, Texas; Paternal grandmother Margaret Hilliard of Tyler, Texas; brother Michael (Yao) Hilliard of Brownsboro , Texas; sister Lindsey (Jason) Edwards of Ft. Worth, Texas;

Tribute Wall

JR

“ I am just now seeing this... So very sorry for your loss!!! We were church family of First Presbyterian Church, Tyler TX. Jenny Connally-Ranshaw

Jenny Connally- Ranshaw - June 07, 2016 at 04:53 PM

KS

“ We were so sorry to hear about Matthew. Your in our thoughts & prayers
Steve & Karen Schmidt

Karen Schmidt - May 30, 2016 at 07:23 PM

JT

“ Matt, you lived life to the fullest and to the beat of Stevie Ray Vaughn making it difficult to understand you sometimes. But two things were certain. You loved your girls and you loved your wife, Kari. That's all we needed to know. We will always love you and miss you. You are family forever. Gone far too soon from this world, but in a much better place. Rest easy now. Love, Charles and Judi Tannachion

Judi Tannachion - May 20, 2016 at 04:33 AM