



## Hillis "Krich" Krichko

April 26, 1935 - June 17, 2024

Hillis "Krich" Krichko, 89, passed away on June 17, 2024, in Bend, Oregon. He was born on April 26, 1935, in Sharon, Pennsylvania, to Czechoslovakian parents George and Sophia Krichko. Hillis was the youngest of eight children. Initially he spoke mostly Czech, mastering English only upon entering school, where he also discovered his prodigious musical talent, particularly with the trombone. This saw him performing with the high school band while still in elementary school, in area nightclubs and with regional Big Bands of the time, by the age of sixteen.

In high school, Hillis was a four-year Varsity athlete, and a star on his basketball team. After graduating from Hickory High School, Hillis married his high school sweetheart, Shirley McGinnis, in 1955. He enlisted in the Air Force, where he was stationed in Goose Bay, Canada, in Everett, Washington and later worked at Lockheed in CA. During his military tenure, he was integral in the repair and service of jets, showcasing his technical abilities.

Post-military, Hillis became a successful entrepreneur, establishing a coffee shop complete with live jazz music, an idea before its time, in the then small town of Los Gatos, CA. He managed the shop along with his wife Shirley while raising his very young family. Hillis eventually left the shop and began working in managerial roles at Sears. He then moved to Bend with his family in 1973, and never left. Hillis loved to work with his hands and solve problems,

so he enjoyed employment at both Cascade Natural Gas and Miller Lumber, earning him respect and admiration from coworkers.

Hillis loved visiting new places with his family, exploring natural wonders such as the Redwoods, Crater Lake, and the coast. His family benefited from his love of music of the Big Band era as it filled his home. Hillis was often humorous, especially evident in his goofy interactions with his grandchildren, with whom he loved creating adventures, and his always-at-the-ready plethora of dad jokes. He loved to converse with people and could forge a lively conversation with anyone. As a Bend resident for over 50 years, Hillis seemed to know everyone in town as he drove around completing errands in his beloved little truck, Sparky. He loved watching and discussing sports and supporting his favorite teams. The Blazers and the Oregon Ducks were common topics for him. Hillis found peace and contentment working in his beautiful yard and enjoying the fruits of his labor.

Hillis is survived by his beloved wife of 68 years, Shirley; his four children, sons Kris, Kip, and Kurt, and daughter Kelly (Dan) Simoneau; 7 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews. His life was full, filled with good music, family, humor, and spontaneity, leaving a legacy that will be cherished by all who knew him. As one of his favorite artists crooned, he “did it his (sic) way.”

The family encourages all to feel free to post memories and photos of your time with Hillis. If a donation in Hillis' name is desired, please visit Central Oregon Veterans Outreach at [covo-us.org](http://covo-us.org) or Central Oregon Council on Aging at [www.councilonaging.org](http://www.councilonaging.org). A celebration of life will be held at a later date.