

REQUIEM FOR A VANNER

I first met William Elliget in February of 1975. Right from the start we disagreed. At that time I don't think I had ever met a more ornery or cantankerous individual. We were both representatives of our van clubs to the Associated Southern Truckers of San Diego, the van council for San Diego County, California. The meetings were held once a month to discuss all of the important issues of the times. We could not agree on anything. If he said red, I went with blue. I drank tequila, he drank whiskey. He was a Pro Union man, and I was a Non Union Man. Although we always disagreed with one another on ALL of the issues, our arguments never sank to the name calling stage. Whatever the issue was, you could count on us being at opposite ends. But through out the years we never went to making disparaging remarks about our parental history. Then, slowly, a mutual respect grew between us. Over time I came to look forward to talking to Willy. I knew we wouldn't see eye to eye, but during the discussion I would gain a different approach, another way of looking at it. Usually an insight I hadn't thought about. And I suspect the same thing was happening to Willy, because after awhile we discovered we were friends.

It was always nice to pull into a van run and start setting up camp and have your activities interrupted by the sound of Willy's laughter echoing throughout the camp. You never had to guess where San Diego Vans was camped. All you had to do was follow the sound of that infectious laughter. That laugh was so distinctive, there was no doubt whatsoever that it was Willy. The sound cascading all over would just draw you into San Diego Vans campsite just to find out what was so damn funny.

Even though Willy was pretty adamant about most of his opinions and beliefs, it was possible to sway him and win him over. Not easy, but possible. On a couple of issues it took me years to convince him to see it my way. And in the end, he converted me from a Tequila drinker to a Jack Daniels Man.

Because of our age difference we often talked about life events. From child rearing to sexual performance, there was not any subject that was too taboo to discuss. Family, Friends, taxes, work, retirement. And yes Maggie, we talked about our wives also. I can't count how many times we sat around the campfire late at night and solved all of the world's problems, just Willy and me. From being a teenager in the Navy during World War Two, a go-cart racer in the 60's, the Hippie era, and the fall of the "Evil Empire, Willy went through life on his own terms and had no regrets.

Throughout all of the van runs, weekend happenings, parties, road rallies and dances, I always looked forward to getting together with San Diego Vans and the Old Man. You knew there would be controversy, joke telling and pranks played on one another. After 30 years of this entertainment, I find something is now missing.

Thanks Willy for being a vanner, you contributed so much to the sport here on the West Coast. But mostly, thanks Bro for just being my friend.

Billo

William P. Elliget
October 13, 1927 – August 23, 2005
Old Man – President -San Diego Vans

Van clubs provide recreational adventures

SPRING VALLEY — Taking your van for a ride around the country and meeting other van owners for a weekend can provide recreational adventures for people of all ages. There are van clubs all over the United States and in other countries. Van clubs had their heyday in the late 70s when there were about 15 clubs in the San Diego area.

"The van movement here has died down, but it is strong in the East and Mid-west," said Bill Elliget of Spring Valley, president of San Diego Vans, one of two clubs still in the area. He has been active in the club 20 years.

Although club membership is down to seven, they still enjoy activities together.

This weekend he and others are attending the West Coast Nationals in King City, Calif. It's a three day campout with entertainment, dancing, games, and sight-seeing. In the summer he went to Harrisonburg, Va., for a gathering of 1,250 vans. He hit many back roads and saw parts of the country he'd never seen before.

People from foreign countries who belong to van clubs in their home countries fly to the United States, rent vans and join outings with clubs here. Many Canadian van owners come down to meet with our clubs. A yearbook lists all the clubs and a contact person.

There is no discrimination in age, race or creed in the van clubs. They are family oriented groups, but singles over 18 are welcome. Mini trucks are also welcome.

Fellowship and travel are the main emphasis but members have compassion for others. They make money to support underprivileged children, take collec-



VENUS SMITH
Around Spring Valley

tions to help needy families and give toys at Christmas.

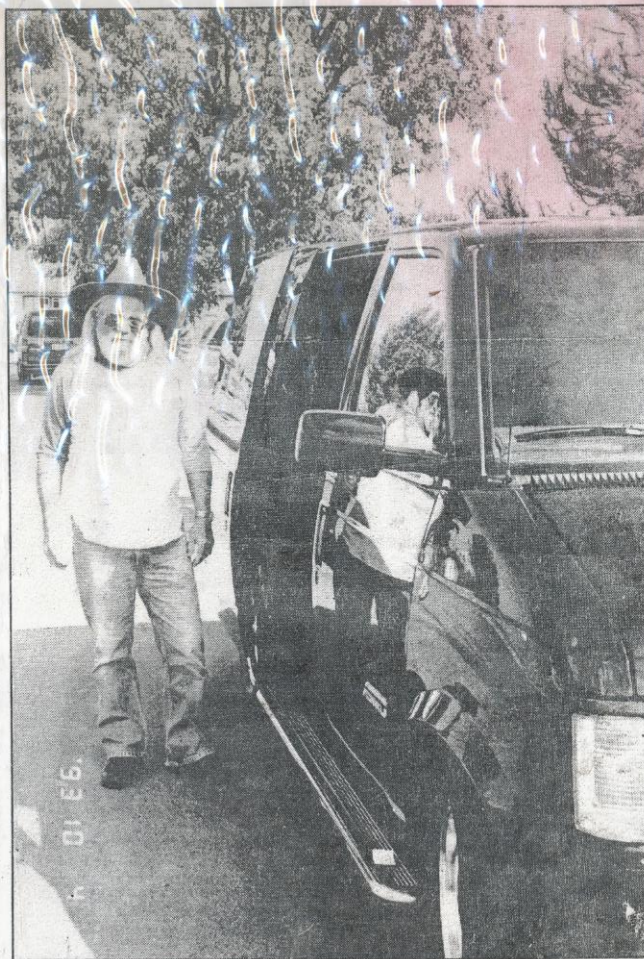
Anyone interested in joining the San Diego Vans or for more information can call Elliget at 469-7314.(vts-jl)

Students to teachers

SPRING VALLEY — A brigade of cadet teachers march from Mount Miguel High School to Avondale Elementary School for 40-minute sessions with elementary children in a program under the direction of Judy Shea, community resource leader at Avondale.

It is part of an elective class for high school students interested in education. They work in a one-to-one relationship, spending their time reading, helping with spelling, math, etc. They work mostly with at risk children.

Shea interviews the high school students and pairs them with the children according to personalities and grade level interests. There are 13 high school cadet teachers, three of which enjoyed the class so much they are repeating it this year.(vrs-jl)



Venus Smith for The Daily Californian

Bill Elliget readies his 1990 Astro van for another trip.

Bill Elliget