

William Applegate is with **Bill Applegate**.
Yesterday at 5:16 AM

William Joseph Applegate died July 1, 2025, at the age of 79. He was a newsman. A legend in the local TV news business and a devoted husband, father and friend.

He wasn't afraid of much. Just three things, really: deep water, tight spaces... and the idea he might not live to see how all this — all of this — ends. Which, in the end, was its own kind of irony — the type he might've appreciated.

He studied history. Would've been there at the beginning if he could. But more than anything, he wanted to see how that human history turned out — every bit the journalist he spent his life perfecting.

Bill, as he was known to most, started life in Indiana and ended up joining a carnival after the untimely death of his mother. He sold stuff door to door among a dozen jobs before joining the Army at the recruitment center in Times Square.

After serving at the DMZ in Korea in the early 1960's, he returned home and became a television journalist. Starting as a reporter in Detroit and Los Angeles, at KNXT (Now KCBS) before being caught in a mass layoff during a newsroom shakeup. He moved into management, promising, "I'll be back to run this place."

Then he set the business on fire.

He was an award-winning and ratings-grabbing News Director in Eugene, then Buffalo, then San Francisco where he celebrated a ratings win by launching fireworks over the competition. The Showmanship had just begun.

He followed that with stints in Chicago, at ABC-owned station WLS-TV. There, he helped launch The Oprah Winfrey Show and led the station from third place in the ratings to first.

From there, at the age of 39, he did the same in New York City as the News Director at WABC.

He went on to become General Manager back in Chicago at WBBM-TV where he bested himself by stealing first place back from his old station WLS-TV, ten years before.

He finally fulfilled his promise and returned to Los Angeles and KCBS where he ran the place... through some of the greatest stories a decade could produce.

He moved on to other stations, ending his career in Cleveland, Ohio. The same place where his wife of 53 years, Kathy Applegate, had grown up. She was the love of his life. They married in 1971 and had four children: William Jr., Brian, Elizabeth and Matthew. All four survive him. He had nine devoted grandkids who miss him very much.

In the end, he hired, fired, and mentored some of the giants in local and national TV. He was loved, feared, hated and every past participle of a verb you can think of.

But undeniably, unquestionably... admired.

He wanted to be remembered as a man in motion: building, pushing, celebrating, mentoring, loving, watching, and waiting for the story to unfold.

In 2014, he retired. First to Florida and then Rancho Mirage, CA.

That's where he died. With a headache. Believing he was in bed next to his wife. And that he would wake up the next morning.

To turn on the news and find out what happened next.