



William "Bill" Vipond Eaton

February 14, 1940 - February 12, 2025

William "Bill" Vipond Eaton, 84, of Centreville, MD, passed away at Compass Hospice House on February 12, 2025 – two days shy of his 85th birthday.

Bill was born in Grosse Ile, MI, on February 14, 1940, the son of John Littell Eaton, Sr. and Marie Ruth (Pooley) Eaton. Bill attended high school in Plymouth Meeting, PA, followed by a Bachelor of Science from the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University. He married the love of his life, Phyllis, on March 26, 1966. Bill's education and passion for the food industry led him to a life-long career in Food Service Design with Cini-Little International, as a Partner. He was actively involved with various organizations including the Cornell Hotel Society, the Foodservice Consultants Society International, and local historic and conservation organizations.

In his 45 years at Cini-Little, Bill was involved in a wide array of foodservice projects worldwide. His most notable projects include the original "Windows on the World" on the top floor of the World Trade Center, multiple cafes within the Smithsonian Institution, including the Mitsitam Café at the National Museum of the American Indian, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, Universal Studios (the parks in Orlando and Los Angeles), The Cornell Hotel School, and the White House (twice). When his daughters were younger, he bought a globe so that they could trace his travels to exotic locations like Trinidad and Tobago, Saudi Arabia and Cairo.

At Cornell, he was active for many years with Cornell Alumni Affairs and Development, the Cornell Alumni Admissions Ambassador Network in the Baltimore-Washington area, the Cornell Council's Sustainable Development and Environmental Committee and the Cornell Hotel Society, which he was Global President of in 1993. In 2001, he was awarded the Frank H.T. Rhodes Exemplary Alumni Service Award, and in 2007, elected to the Cornell Board of Trustees.

Bill also served as a trustee and life member of the Cornell University Council. He was elected President of Food Service Society International for their inaugural year and held leadership roles with the Society for Hospitality and Foodservice Management. His expertise extended to judging the National Restaurant Association's Kitchen Innovation Awards for many years. In 2016, Foodservice Equipment & Supplies Magazine awarded him their Hall of Fame Award. The honor that he held most dear was being part of the inaugural class of the "Hotelie Hall of Fame", established by the Cornell Hotel School in 2022.

Closer to home, he was active with Woods Church, multiple youth organizations, the Cape Arthur Community Association, as well as "the host with the most" (with Phyllis' help, of course) for multiple parties a year, both at his home in Severna Park and the farm in Centreville.

Bill retired in 2016, and he and Phyllis moved to Walnut Grove Farm in Centreville, MD. They enjoyed fixing the historic farmhouse, gardening and daily walks to the pier for sunset. To keep themselves from the boredom of retirement, they continued to host alumni crab feasts for both Cornell and Marshall University (Phyllis' alma mater), at times welcoming over 600 people to the farm for crabs, beer, an assortment of other foods and tours of the property.

Bill is survived by his wife of almost 59 years, Phyllis Jean (Wright) Eaton; four daughters, Jacqueline (Kevin Ball), Caryl (Hugo Cardenas), Pamela (Heath Berlin) and Paula (Gary Rife, Sr.); 11 grandchildren and their families, including nine great-grandchildren, and two great-great grandchildren, as well as his brother, John Littell Eaton, Jr. (Suzanne), and sister Carolyn Rakinic, niece Deborah (Doug Hannum) and nephew John Littell Eaton, III (Mary), four grand-nieces, two grand-nephews, and their families. He is also survived by Phyllis's nephew, John Wright (Camille) and family. He is predeceased by his father and mother, nephew James Eaton (surviving wife, Gale), and niece Alice Marie Wright.

A Witness to the Resurrection will be held at Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church in Severna Park, Maryland, on March 8, 2025, at 2:00pm.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Eaton Family Scholarship at the Cornell Nolan School of Hotel Administration (giving.cornell.edu, under "other" and note name, or call 800-279-3099); Compass Hospice House in Centreville, MD (compassregionalhospice.org); or the Foodservice Consultant Society International's Education Foundation which supports continuing education for new consultants (fcsief.org).

Photo by mk Photography

Previous Events

Witness to the Ressurrection

MAR 8. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church
611 Baltimore Annapolis Blvd
Severna Park, MD 21146

Tribute Wall

MC

“ *In memory of the wonderful Bill Eaton, a talented, respected and innovative entrepreneur, always welcoming, caring, and supportive to colleagues, co-workers , students and community, both by opening his wallet, and by giving of his talents and time to support so many individuals plus a staggering number of worthy organizations and causes.*

Bill, you are loved, appreciated and will be forever remembered and missed for your vibrant, inspiring, approachable demeanor, inclusiveness, willingness to share (and great parties!), especially so by me.

Margaret Clark

Friend, Colleague and fellow Cornell Hotelie

Margaret Clark - March 06, 2025 at 05:55 PM

MC

“ *Margaret Clark purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of William "Bill" Vipond Eaton.*



Margaret Clark - March 05, 2025 at 03:57 PM



“ *Serenity Wreath was purchased for the family of William "Bill" Vipond Eaton.*



March 03, 2025 at 03:24 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of William "Bill" Vipond Eaton.

March 03, 2025 at 03:24 PM



“ My heartfelt condolences. Bill was my Professor at Cornell Hotel School and became a lifetime hospitality advisor. He was so generous with his time and wisdom and I was always grateful to bend his ear and swap stories, never knowing wear his eyes were focused behind tinted specs! HA!. He emphasized the importance of people, the root of any success story, and the power of a synergized team. These values are intrinsic in the DNA of every biz, economy, community. "It takes a village" and " the hiring decision is the most important one you make" are Eaton idioms I always cite. Another I often echo "In the hospitality field, People is foremost of the 4 P's of Marketing." Advice to live by. Cheers, big fella!! - Peter J . Atkinson, Harvard U

Peter J. Atkinson - March 03, 2025 at 02:16 PM



“ Selma and Nahum Goldberg and Family purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of William "Bill" Vipond Eaton.



Selma and Nahum Goldberg and Family - March 02, 2025 at 12:26 PM

SF

“ Selma and Nahum Goldberg and Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of William "Bill" Vipond Eaton.

Selma and Nahum Goldberg and Family - March 02, 2025 at 12:26 PM

D'

“ We mourn the loss of Bill a true luminary in the hospitality Industry, who passed away on February 12th, 2025. Known for their unparalleled vision and dedication Bill revolutionized the way we experience hospitality, inspiring countless individuals to pursue excellence and compassion in their careers. I am blessed to have known our icon Bill through his daughter Pam (classmates at Cornell). We kept in touch as Bill and Phyllis his beloved wife they were the best hosts of the many Cornell events at their residence in Severna Park and their farm bringing together alumni and students to share the "Cornell Spirit", "Life is Service" Bill may your journey be filled with stars and know you will be greatly missed
Lovingly
Dr. Eleonora Gafton '89

Dr. Eleonora Gafton '89 - February 24, 2025 at 02:51 PM

LS

“ Dear Caryl, I was sorry to hear of the loss of your father and remember him from many events while we were at Cornell. He was always so friendly and gracious. Sincerest condolences to you and your family.
Liz Schafer



Liz Schafer - February 24, 2025 at 11:40 AM

JF

“ Uncle Bill was no doubt a man to be respected. I have fond memories from my childhood of visits with the family . May God give the family the strength and comfort they need for the days that lie ahead.



Jody Fowler - February 23, 2025 at 02:24 PM

JC

“ June Clark lit a candle in memory of William "Bill" Vipond Eaton



June Clark - February 21, 2025 at 09:20 PM

JC

*Dear Phyllis and family,
We are so sorry for your loss, you and Bill have been a part of our family for over 30+ years always enjoyed your visits here at the farm. He will be missed.*

June and family

June Clark - February 21, 2025 at 09:24 PM

JR

“ Bill was a huge part of Cape Arthur being the place Debbie & I loved for over 35 years. He was a great guy and he will definitely be missed.

John & Debbie Rhoades

John Rhoades - February 21, 2025 at 02:54 PM

EH

“ Uncle Bill will forever hold a special place in my heart. From the giant family parties in Severna Park to the even more gigantic farm parties, my childhood was made special with his love and devotion to family. The artificial snow covered christmas tree, almost too tall for the space, will be among so so many treasured memories. Wilbur, Spanky, eating raw soybeans - I would not be who I am today without all the beauty afforded to me by my lovely family. You will be always part of who I have become and I hope you knew how much that meant to me.

Emily Hannum - February 21, 2025 at 11:06 AM

HS

“ Bill joined Cini-Grissom in early 1970, six months after I did. He was my mentor; we worked together on many projects, including "Windows on the World" at the World Trade Center, the kitchen renovation at the White House in '72, and the new Pan Am flight kitchen at JFK Airport to prepare meals for the coming 747's. I learned a lot from Bill. He will be missed. My sincerest condolences to his family. Harry Schildkraut

Harry Schildkraut - February 21, 2025 at 09:27 AM

RP

“ Rachel Phillips lit a candle in memory of William "Bill" Vipond Eaton



Rachel Phillips - February 20, 2025 at 07:57 PM

GB

Have memories with Bill that I remember and treasure. What a gentleman. Our condolences with your loss. God bless Bill. George and Linda Baggott

george Baggott - March 09, 2025 at 03:53 PM