

History Channel's 'Maverick Archaeologist' Fred Willard Dead

Frederick Lawson Willard, of the History Channel's famous "Roanoke: Search for the Lost Colony" mini-series, died at 4:15 PM on October 17, 2017, at the age of 77. He was killed in a hunting accident at the Mt. Prospect farm in Leggette, NC, when he became stuck climbing up a deer stand, lost his balance, and fell 20 feet to the ground, head-first.

His wife and business partner, 34-year-old Kathryn Louise Sugg Willard (also featured on the History Channel), bore heartbreaking witness to the tragic event. "I was supervising his climb up the deer stand from about 100 feet away, so my scent wouldn't spoil his hunting. He wanted so much to go hunting that day, and I had watched him make climbs like that *dozens* of times in the 12 years we had known each other. So when he became stuck right at the top of that stand, I was surprised, but still not alarmed.

"But then-----I saw him *fall!* I screamed and ran to him as fast as I could. He was still conscious, and he said, 'Roll me over.' So for a brief moment, I still had this hope that, ok, maybe this *isn't* as bad a nightmare as I feared. But I was wrong. It was horrible! There was so much blood coming from his scalp, his nose, his mouth. And while he was breathing, he was *gurgling*. I begged him to go to the hospital, to not be stubborn---he didn't care for doctors very much---but he just said, 'Hold me up. Let me look at the farm.'

"I did as he asked, all the while still pleading on how we wouldn't want to find out the hard way there was something seriously wrong with him---like internal injuries, a broken rib, a punctured lung. But he just said, 'Hold me-----hold me.' And then-----and *then*-----he *stopped breathing* and he got *cold!* His left eye was still half-open---and I saw the light go *out* of it!"

Kathryn ran to their truck, a white 2007 Ford Ranger, and frantically called 9-1-1, as well as Greg Marquart, a member of the Mt. Prospect Hunt Club who was also there hunting that day in another area. While she tried to give CPR to Fred---after repositioning her truck to mark the entrance to the farm for the police and the EMS---Greg assisted in guiding the first responders to where Fred had fallen.

While the EMTs worked on Fred, trying to get his heart beating again, Kathryn called everyone she could think of who needed to be alerted to the situation, including Fred's ex-wife, Carol Dworkowski (whom Fred had just had lunch with a few hours prior), the other members of the Mt. Prospect Hunt Club, colleagues, friends, and of course, her own family. Her godfather, Joe Pitt, owner of the Tarboro Ace Hardware store and mayor of that NC town, was among the next ones to arrive on the scene for her.

For half an hour, aggressive CPR, IV drugs, and diphibulators were applied to save Fred's life. But, tragically, it was no use. Fred was pronounced DOA---dead on arrival; he never regained consciousness after slipping away in Kathryn's arms.

Fred was the creator and head of the Lost Colony Center for Science and Research, Inc., a 501-C3 non-profit archaeological organization that had very humble, and yet amazing,

beginning as The Croatan Group. After contracting Lyme Disease over 30 years ago, Fred decided to dedicate his life to solving what happened to the Lost Colony of 1587, referred to by Kathryn as “America's oldest cold case.” “What happened to Sir Walter Raleigh's 1587 Roanoke colony is the most exciting and unsolved mystery in North Carolina, maybe North *America*,” Fred had always said.

Fred had moved out to North Carolina from his hometown of Annapolis, Maryland, intending to retire. His Lyme Disease had left him permanently disabled, and no longer able to hold a normal job. In addition, at its onset, it had also left him in a five-year semi-coma state, where all he could do was eat, sleep, and read. And every year afterward, when the weather suddenly got very hot or very cold, he would have another relapse.

But then, in 1993, Hurricane Emily showed up in North Carolina, and it blew through the area Fred had so often read about during his convalescences. Knowing storms often uncovered artifacts and concealed sites, Fred was curious to know if there was anything out in that particular area. He got together with three friends of his (forming the Croatan Group, mentioned earlier), they went exploring, and the rest---as they say---is history.

Fred met Kathryn in the fall of 2005, going back to school for his archaeology degree. She herself was in that same anthropology class to obtain her biology degree. He hired her for an internship in the spring/summer of 2006, and they've been together ever since; they were supposed to celebrate their third wedding anniversary this December 18.

Fred had known, due to his age and his health, it was a high probability he might not live to see the mystery of the Lost Colony be solved. But he wanted to make sure the work could and would continue *without* him, so he and Kathryn established the Sugg-Willard Foundation, as an endowment to fund the research, and to provide scholarships to any college students interested in archaeology, coastal North Carolina Native Americans, and the first English colonial settlements in America. The website for Fred and Kathryn's research and accomplishments is www.lost-colony.com. If you wish to donate or make some other contribution to the Lost Colony Center or the Sugg-Willard Foundation, the mailing address is 9291 NC Hwy 171, Williamston, NC 27892 and the phone number is 252-955-5924. Please do whatever you can so that Fred's dream is not in vain, and the Lost Colony does not remain forever lost.

In addition to being an archaeologist, Fred was also a hunter, fisher, champion tree farmer, multi-millionaire, real estate baron, lawyer, marina owner, NASCAR race car driver (Fred “The Wildman” Willard), and champion wrestler/wrestling coach throughout his life. “You can say many things about him,” Kathryn says, “but one thing you can *not* say is that his life was ever *dull!*”

Fred Willard is survived by his wife, Kathryn, his son, Fred Jr., his daughter, Paige McKusack, his grandson, Lev Willard, and his ex-wife, Carol Dworkowski. The church service is scheduled to take place at Calvary Episcopal Church, in Tarboro, NC, on November 1 at 2 PM. But Fred had informed Kathryn he wanted to be cremated, and his ashes scattered in multiple locations important to him. These locations are the Croatan site in Buxton, NC (where Hurricane Emily had blown through), the Waratan site in Edenton, NC (featured on the History

Channel's "Roanoke" mini-series), his home in East Lake, NC (next door to the town of Manteo), Mt. Prospect in Leggette, NC, and of course, the Lost Colony Center in Williamston, NC. So those who cannot make it to the initial church service, you *will* have other options available. And those of you who wish to assist or contribute to these services, please contact Katherine Glenn of Jefferson Florists in Greenville, NC. She can be contacted at 252-412-0728.