Bill “Big Bird” Gebhardt

1945-2024

Bill Gebhardt left for quieter ranges on December 30, 2024. He was an accomplished benchrest shooter, IBS officer for decades and IBS life member and machinist. As a skilled machinist, he created his Bald Eagle Precision Machine Co. in Lock Haven, PA. The business was sold to Grizzly Imports in 2010.

He served in the U. S. Army in Vietnam as an M.P. Over the years, his rifle rests were seen on firing lines around the world. When asked about his sales to the benchrest crowd, he said “it’s a big world out there” with an unseen market outside of competition. For example, famed country singer Hank Williams Jr. is a shooter and called him a couple of times for rests. Bill traded his products to Hank for CDs and other items.

Some may have known Bill as “Big Bird”. That nickname originated when a customer called Bald Eagle Precision one day and asked for the “Head Eagle”, Bill responded with “you’ve got Big Bird” - it stuck hard and fast. He was also known as “Cash Only Gebhardt”. But that is another story.

Big Bird was a long time friend to me and the entire shooting fraternity. He built a solid business from nothing and was able to work professionally in his first love, shooting rifles. I remember him telling me about his early competition days when he was a regular at the winter group benchrest matches at South Creek in rural northern PA. In his eagerness, he once drove there one Sunday morning for nearly two hours only to find he had the wrong date. I think he did that only one time.

He has been in declining health for a number of years. He died at home.

He is survived by two children. Kelly is a veterinarian in NC and owns a large practice. His son Harry lives close by and is an engineer at Penn State University.

Jeff Stover

January 11, 2025