
Lou Montoya

Lou was born in Gallup NM, and his family moved to Wheatland when he was 2 years old in 1928. His family worked as hired labor on farms, and then became Tenant Farmers. They lived on several farms in the Wheatland area. As his brothers were drafted and volunteered for WWII, Lou stayed back to work on the farm and support his parents and eight siblings not in the military. After the war, he fell in love with Mary Lou Rodriguez, and they were married on November 26, 1949. As a young married couple, Lou and Mary Lou continued to live on the farm, but decided they needed steadier work, so they moved to town. Lou worked on the Colorado and Southern Railroad as a Gandy Dancer (a track maintainer) between Wheatland and Chugwater, then got a job at Sports Tire Shop, and then was hired-away by the Wheatland COOP Association (now Frenchman Valley COOP). Lou worked at the COOP over 40 years, and did every job at the COOP. He worked himself up the chain from fixing flat tires to managing the whole operation for many years.

The family believes he loved working at the COOP so much because it kept him close to farming. Along the way, Lou made hundreds of friends as he was known for serving his customers. There were countless times late at night that the phone would ring with a customer calling saying they ran out of propane or their heater quit working. Without fail, Lou would get the tools or parts needed, or get into the propane truck and drive miles to help the farmer/rancher. That kind of service was common for Lou. Whether it was delivering propane after hours or going out in the middle of the night to fix a heater, Lou's service to the farmers, ranchers, and anyone who lived out-of-town was constant and unwavering.

Lou and Mary Lou had two daughters -- Cynthia and Christine. Both Lou and Mary Lou were adamant that their daughters receive a college education. Both Cindy and Cris graduated from the University of Wyoming with Bachelor Degrees in Education, both taught at the elementary-school level, and both retired from teaching after many years in the classroom. Lou was particularly proud that his daughters received a college education, as he had to quit school after the 8th grade to work on the family farm.

Lou and Mary Lou were married nearly 72 years, and in 2019 were identified by Worldwide Marriage Encounter as the "Longest Married Couple" in Wyoming.
