

## Bill Russell

William "Bill" Leonard Russell passed away January 7, 2022, at his home outside Wheatland, Wy. He was born in Bentonville, Arkansas on May 11, 1937, and was a lifelong resident and farmer of Platte County.

Bill is preceded in death by his parents Ernest "Arky" Russell and Lorraine (Wilson) Russell, and his wife, JoDale. He is survived by his three children: Gayle (Valiant), Newt (Wendy), and Jack (Vicky); eight grandchildren; ten great-grandchildren; and one particularly spoiled Sheltie.

Bill graduated from Wheatland High School in 1956. He spent the next several years farming and working with the Hanks family in the lumber mill on Laramie Peak, where he became a part of the family. His time at the mill instilled a love of woodworking in him, and he became a master of the craft, turning old, decrepit furniture into works of art.

When he was 23, Bill ran away with the love of his life, JoDale Yeadon. They married in Casper, Wy, on August 1, 1959, and spent the next 58 years joyfully bickering at each other until JoDale passed on Aug 23, 2017. Bill and JoDale settled on Antelope Creek in 1969, where they made a home and raised their three children. They moved to Chugwater, Wy, for a few years but finally returned to Bordeaux in 1999, where they remained there for the rest of their lives.

Bill spent his life farming on Slater Flats, working the farm originally homesteaded by his grandfather in 1910 and building his own. He loved to teach his helpers how to make straight rows – no snoozy tracks allowed – and listened to Shakespeare on tape to pass the long hours in the tractor. Bill eventually passed the farm to his own son, Newt, who continues to work it with his children and grandchildren.

Bill spent his winters "doing anything to keep the cash flowing". He continued to work with the Hanks family for many years after marrying JoDale. He filled other winters by driving the Slater-to-Wheatland school bus, running the beet piler in Wheatland, working on the highway around Rawlins, and fighting the Laramie Peak Fire of 1964, where he almost cut his own foot off.

Bill enjoyed waking the roosters in the morning, attending daily meetings of Western Sky's Old Coots' Coffee Club, hunting prairie dogs with his friend Ralph, and taking his dog, Bobby, on truck rides to supervise his son's and grandchildren's farm work. He enjoyed bowling and snowmobiling and was Grand Master of IOOF when he was younger.

Bill was an avid collector of guns, tractors, and western art. He loved hunting through auctions and tractor parts stores with his son, Jack, to find exclusive toy tractors to restore. Bill also loved to work in his shop, restoring antique furniture, reloading ammo, and making wooden boxes and rolling pins with his daughter, Gayle.

Bill Russell was a pillar of the Platte County community. He had a quirky sense of humor, loved his family, and was always willing to help anyone who needed it. He made many life-long friends in the area and was liked and respected by everyone who knew him.