



William L. "Bill" Russell

July 7, 1937 - November 14, 2023

Frankfort – William Lee “Bill” Russell, age 86, passed away peacefully at home surrounded by his wife and beloved dogs on Tuesday, November 14, 2023. Services will be held at Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church Chapel, on Friday, December 1, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. with Rev. Todd Lester and Gary Bertram officiating. Burial will follow at Sunset Memorial Gardens. Military Honors will be observed at the gravesite by the American Legion Post 24. Visitation will be held at the Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church Chapel from 11:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. on Friday, December 1, 2023.

Bill was born in Northville, Michigan on July 7, 1937, to the late Frank Victor Russell and Florence Elizabeth McGee Russell. He was a graduate of Northville High School and studied at Michigan State University and UCLA. Bill served in the US Air Force and retired from the US Army after 20 years of military service. During his service, he served 3 tours in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot for several generals and was a highly decorated member of the 101st Air Command Screaming Eagles at Fort Campbell. After retirement, Bill tried his hand at farming and horses, but his love for flying never left. Bill took a job in Frankfort and served the Commonwealth of Kentucky as an executive pilot flying governors, lieutenant governors, and many dignitaries for many years.

Bill loved to hunt deer on the Penn Family Farm as well as the annual

“Thanksgiving Rabbit Hunt” on his son-in-law, JW Blackburn’s, family farm. He loved to play golf and encouraged his grandsons to pursue the sport. Bill was bigger than life with a tender heart and was known for his dedication to his family – especially his wife, Darla. He will be remembered as a kind, gentle, and compassionate husband, father, grandfather and friend.

He is survived by his wife of 44 years, Darla; children, Debbie Rager (Ricky), Kathy Mitchell (Dale), Cindy Russell, Carrie Nunnally (Doug), Martha Penn Blackburn (JW), and Roger Penn (Lora); grandchildren, Carson Rager (Maggie), Cameron Rager, Zoe Mitchell, Keelin Mitchell, Christian Nunnally, Ian Nunnally, Madeline Penn, Julia Blackburn, and Caroline Blackburn; great-grandchildren, Layton Rager, Beckett Rager, and Charlotte Rager; brother, Harvey Russell (Caryl); and niece and nephew, Robin and Rhett.

Serving as pallbearers will be JW Blackburn, George McMakin, Robert Vick, Braeden Barwick, Carson Rager, Cameron Rager, Roger Penn, and Don Werner Jr. Honorary pallbearers will be Frank Stanfield, Carter Stinnett, Jason Luking, Buford Quire, and Ricky Rager.

In honor of the United States military, the family would like to encourage those attending to wear patriotic colors of red, white, or blue.

In lieu of flowers, expressions of sympathy may be made to Dogs Helping Heroes, <https://www.dogshelpingheroes.org/>

Arrangements are under the direction of Harrod Brothers Funeral Home & Crematory.

Cemetery Details

Sunset Memorial Gardens

3250 Versailles Road
Versailles, KY

Previous Events

Visitation

DEC 1. 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM (ET)

Forks Of Elkhorn Baptist Church Chapel
495 Duckers Road
Midway, KY 40347

Service

DEC 1. 1:00 PM (ET)

Forks Of Elkhorn Baptist Church Chapel
495 Duckers Road
Midway, KY 40347

Tribute Wall

DS

“ Dear Darla and your family, I am so sorry to hear of Bill's passing. He was a great classmate of mine, he was always fun and a caring man. Keeping you and your family in my prayers

Dawn Schroder - November 17, 2023 at 06:39 PM

RD

“ Darla, Martha, JW and family, Richard and I just read of Bills passing and are so very sorry for your loss! our thoughts and prayers are with you and your loved ones. May you find peace knowing he is with our Lord.

richard and lois douglass - November 17, 2023 at 12:16 PM

BT

“ Darla so sorry to be reading about the passing of your beloved husband. Prayers for you and your family.

Billy and Linda Tillett - November 17, 2023 at 07:54 AM