

## Robert Watson Bell



Robert W. Bell Jr. died Monday, August 18, 2014.

He was born January 21, 1937, in Pittsburgh, to Dr. and Mrs. Robert W. Bell Sr., and grew up in Fredericktown and Rices Landing with younger brothers, Barry John Bell and William Andrew Bell.

From the small Pennsylvania mining towns of his boyhood, he learned the value of a hard day's work. He learned pretense is fragile and debilitating to the human

character. He learned to measure others by their deeds more than by their words. He learned the skills for his life-long love of hunting and fishing and as an outdoorsman to be attuned with nature and to provide food for his table and the tables of others. And he learned families must pull together in adversity.

These qualities of self-reliance and no-nonsense honesty bred a man who was unaffected by the trappings of success. "What you see is what you get," "Tell it like it is" and "Use your common sense," are terms that most often come to mind to those who knew Mr. Bell.

When he and his boyhood friend, Marine Lt. Gen. William Keys, left their hometown for the U.S. Naval Academy, Class of 1960, they embarked on dual paths as students and future warriors. Their close relationship existed until the end. Mr. Bell maintained strong friendships with his classmates throughout his life.

After graduation from the academy, he married his beautiful hometown sweetheart, Beverly Allison, and assumed the role of husband and provider. They struggled through the early years with the low pay and long separations of a young Navy family.

When his fine children, Bobby, Brian and Bonnie, came on the scene, he became a father, mentor and teacher. They learned to work hard, work together and be at one with nature. Mr. Bell faced the proverbial challenge of

elevating his knowledge and wisdom a notch higher when he became a grandfather to Brian's children, Josh, Benjamin and Ethan.

Mr. and Mrs. Bell worked as a team to forge a beautiful life together with their family. When Mrs. Bell died in 1994, and his son, Bobby, died in 2002, the Bell family pulled together in mutual support to survive their common adversity. After his wife's death, Mr. Bell found that an empty house could be a lonely place. He was more fortunate than most when he met his perfect life companion and beautiful wife, Nanette. She matched his passion and creative talents while providing delicate, and sometimes more substantial, persuasion to smooth the edges and refine his character while bringing a strong feminine touch to make his house a home.

Mr. Bell became a father figure once more to Nanette's son, Drake Hodgkiss, and set an example for him with the same values for a strong work ethic rational thought, integrity, and candor he provided his own children and grandchildren.

In his professional life, he served as a U.S. Naval officer and aviator during the Vietnam era, and left the Navy to become a pilot for United Airlines. He loved every minute of his aviation profession, from which he retired as a 757/767 captain in 1997. He started a home construction business to fill in the finances during the inevitable series of strikes, layoffs and downturns of the air transport industry. His profession provided an abundance of time off, and he became a landlord, business manager, contractor, farmer and a carpenter to fill that time and to satisfy his desire to expand his personal horizons.

Mr. Bell was a craftsman of considerable skill; he used his woodworking and artistic talents to fulfill his compelling need to do something creative with his hands every day. Throughout his life, he used his talent and abilities to provide additional income, when needed, to challenge his mind, to develop new methods, to produce creative products, and to provide joy to his family and friends as recipients of gifts of the fruits of his labors.

Every step of his life, and every part that he played, involved his interaction with literally hundreds of other human beings. Mr. Bell was a student of human nature, a raconteur and an extrovert. He truly enjoyed the daily interaction with people and left a lasting impression of genuineness on all with whom he interacted.

He lived a successful, productive and fulfilling life and, as the saying goes, "He did it his way." He will be dearly missed by his family, friends and all with whom he shared his humor, insight and kindness.

Surviving are his loving wife, Nanette; son, Brian; daughter, Bonnie Bowen and her husband Steve; stepson, Drake; stepdaughter, Aimée; grandsons, Josh,

Benjamin and Ethan; brothers, John and his wife Mandy, and Bill and his wife Dawn.

The influence of a man's life is not measured by calendar pages, but in the number of lives he has touched during his time on Earth and the manner in which he has touched them. During his 77 years, Mr. Bell touched a multitude of lives and brought reality, laughter and meaning to those lives through the quality of his own.

*Observer-Reporter*