

## **William Theodore “Bill” Sitz**

William Theodore “Bill” Sitz, 87 of Burwell, Nebraska died September 17, 2014 at the Community Memorial Health Center in Burwell.

Funeral services will be 10:00 a.m. Saturday, September 20, 2014 at the Burwell Baptist Church in Burwell. Burial will be in the Rose Cemetery at 1:00 p.m. Pastor Stan Gurney and Pastor Jeffrey Wohlfert will officiate. Visitation will be Friday from 5 -8 p.m. at Hitchcock Funeral Home in Burwell, Nebraska. Memorials are suggested to the Rose Church.

Bill was born July 6, 1927 in Kearney, Nebraska to William August and Frieda (Gerdes) Sitz. On their farm near Kearney, Bill cultivated a love for growing crops and cattle. In an era of red Herefords, the Sitz’s black Angus were not considered “popular” at the time. Iron ran through Bill’s blood as a young man, as he trapped furs and used the income from his furs to purchase materials to build his first underslung.

As a young boy Bill spent many a night sleeping in the barn with the cattle while he and his family were on the road showing cattle. Bill enjoyed showing at the County Fairs, AK-SAR-BEN and the State Fair. He remembers waiting at the railroad tracks at Buda, to load the family’s registered Angus cattle and Hampshire hogs onto the rented car, riding in the car with the animals to the next show.

In March of 1937 Bill moved with his family from Buda, Nebraska and began a new life in the ranching community called the Green Valley south of Atkinson. On the rich, fertile wet meadows the cowherd grew. During this time in 1945 Bill became a lifetime member of the American Angus Association.

Bill married Dee Stout on August 20, 1947 in Atkinson, Nebraska. Living in Holt County they named their ranch the 36 Angus Ranch. Bill stayed with the cattle during the epic “Blizzard of 1949”, but did finally convince Dee, who was in the family way, to board a plane in February of 1949. Shortly after, their first son was born.

One final move brought the family and cowherd to southeast Rock County. Four children, Bill Jr., Judy, Sheryl and Mike, were raised on the ranch. Even the sandy soils responded to Bill’s talent of farming, as he continued to raise crops under pivots, and the rangeland improved to win the NRCS Conservationist Award. Along with his lifetime membership to the American Angus Association he was also member of the Nebraska Stock Growers Association.

Bill loved the ranch, but farm auctions were his social life. You may have seen Bill at one of the many farm sales that he so enjoyed attending. “I may have one of those...” or “This piece can be converted...” came up in many conversations. He was such a farm auction regular that he had his own bidding number reserved for him—36. He had an appreciation for iron and saw the potential that every piece of scrap of iron held. Bill said while he was at a farm sale, iron would attach to him. In his later years he embraced the digital age and would logon regularly to Big

Iron on the internet. He didn't feel comfortable bidding, so he would give his son, Bill Jr. a quick call, and he would bid on the item for him.

Bill's energy kept him going on various projects throughout the years. He was not intimidated by problems that would arise. With his upbringing he knew every problem had a solution and he went after the problem with an energy that was unmatched. From his natural ability of mechanics and skillful welding, he fixed, created, rebuild motors, tractors, and the occasional grandchildren's car. He even recognized the front end of a tractor that he built 50 years before, in the local tractor pull contest.

There was one problem he couldn't solve. While Bill beat cancer in the first round, the second round took him surprising quick. In his typical "Get 'er done" mentality, he never gave up, giving it his best fight. He died never thinking about himself or complaining, but still thinking about others up until the very end. He died peacefully, and with dignity.

Bill Sitz will be remembered for his work ethic, cheerful smile and eternal optimism, his amazing talent for building things out of iron, his particular eating habits (aside from sweets and fruit there were only 13 foods that dare enter his mouth), tractors, constant watch of the weather, RFD TV, horses, and in his later years - Shetland ponies. In his last few months, the highlight of his day was eating breakfast with his friends at Verda's Cafe.

Bill is survived by four children, Bill Sitz of Burwell, Nebraska, Judy Newlin of Burwell, Nebraska, Sheryl and Lloyd Bellinger of Niwot, Colorado and Mike and Debra Sitz of Burwell, Nebraska. Ten grandchildren and spouses, Stephanie Sitz, Jesse and Tori Sitz, Cody and Melissa Sitz, Stacie (Newlin) and Jason Roblyer, Bethany (Sitz) and Joel Johnston, Eric Newlin, Zac and Dr. Mariah Bellinger, Johanna (Sitz) and Brett Sprencer, Alexis (Bellinger) and Travis Fletcher and Ransom and Rachael Sitz and seven great-grandchildren, John Sitz, Lena Spencer, Macy Sitz, Jordee Johnston, Brady Spencer, Mya Sitz and Archibald Fletcher. One sister, Delores and Jim Wallace of Eckert, Colorado and a sister-in-law, Donna Sitz-Arthrum of Billings, Montana.

Bill was preceded in death by his parents, his wife, Dee, two brothers, Francis and Bob, an infant sister, Ruth, and a son-in-law, Dave Newlin.