



Bill Sutherland

August 10, 1927 - December 2, 2021

William Neil Sutherland

August 10, 1927 – December 2, 2021

William Neil “Bill” Sutherland passed away on Thursday, December 2, at age 94, in Springfield Tennessee. Bill is preceded in death by his wife Margaret Sutherland, his granddaughter Clare Sutherland, his parents Earnest and Vivian Sutherland, and his two brothers Gene and Keith Sutherland. He is survived by his large family. By his children Ann and Greg Peterson, of Gering Nebraska, Neil and Mona Sutherland, of Cedar Hill Tennessee, Jane Sutherland of Lincoln Nebraska, and George and Carol Sutherland of League City Texas. He and his wife Margaret started a large family, with thirteen grandchildren and twenty-six great-grandchildren scattered from Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, Texas, Tennessee, and Massachusetts. A memorial service will be held at Trinity Episcopal Church, 410 N. Pine Street, Florence Alabama, on Sunday December 19 at 1:30 pm. Funeral services are being provided by Austin & Bell Funeral Home, of Springfield TN. Honorary pallbearers for the service will include lifelong friends Scotty Bobo, Kris Engelstad, Steve Engelstad, and Marty Engelstad. The family asks that donations be made in lieu of flowers to either Trinity Episcopal Church (<https://onrealm.org/trinityflorence/-/form/give/now>) or Habitat for Humanity – Restore in Florence, Alabama (<https://shoalshabitatrestore.square.site/>).

Born on August 10, 1927, on a small farm near Adel Iowa, he saw a great deal of life in his 94 years. Born to Earnest Morris Sutherland and Vivian Martha Sutherland, and a family of older brothers Gene and Keith, he grew up during the depression years and WWII. No indoor plumbing in the home, farming with horses, and picking corn by hand was typical of life on an Iowa farm. Educated at Washington Township Consolidated, where he was confident that he was in the top ten of his graduating class. "There were only eleven of us in the graduating class," he once said, "and I knew I just had to be smarter than at least one of them." Like his brothers before him, he enlisted in the military, serving in the Navy when his turn came near the end of WWII. "It's just what we all did," he would say. He was home on leave from the Navy when he learned of the death of President Roosevelt. "I was digging a ditch by hand for a water line from the windmill to the house, when Mom came out to tell me the news she heard on the radio." That was how he learned of that historic event, and the first time there was running water in the home.

Upon the close of WWII, thoughts turned to his future. Bill enrolled at Iowa State University and earned a BS in Farm Operations in 1950. He earned an MS in Soil Management in 1954, and ultimately a PhD in Soil Fertility in 1960. While in graduate programs, he worked as a youth assistant in the Iowa Extension Service, and as a soil conservation Agent in the Minnesota Extension Service. Upon completing his PhD, Bill joined the National Fertilizer Development branch of Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Starting with TVA in Knoxville, TN and Florence AL, he introduced TVA fertilizer production and use technology. Upon relocation to Lincoln, NE in 1964 he served as Program Director in several states in the Midwest, Great Plains, and Rocky Mountains. He served as an agronomist on a joint TVA/ State Department team in Viet Nam in 1967, studying projected nutrient needs for crop production in several Southeast Asian countries. Relocating to Muscle Shoals AL headquarters in 1978 he served as branch agronomist and assistant chief for TVA's national programs in soils management, land use, and development of markets for

high value crops. Bill retired from TVA and sunset his highly accomplished career in 1988. He spent his career figuring out how to feed the world.

Along the way Bill met a very nice young lady named Margaret Fowler in an Iowa State chemistry class they shared. After an hour exam he took the opportunity to introduce himself to her, and the conversation reportedly was rather awkward as she had done poorly on the exam. Of course, he had aced the test and was in a great mood. Yet somehow he persevered in the conversation, she agreed to a first date, a second, a third, and finally he and Margaret Diantha Fowler were married in September of 1949. They were inseparable, and their love story lasted 65 years until her death in 2015. Now they are reunited, and have picked up right where they left off. Four children were born: Ann Leslie in 1951, Neil Rockwell in 1953, Jane Elizabeth in 1955, and George Duncan in 1958. They started off their family life in Iowa, moved to Rochester, Minnesota, and upon completing his PhD joined Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and relocated to Knoxville TN in 1960, to Florence AL in 1962, and Lincoln NE in 1964. His final assignment with TVA brought him back to Florence, Alabama in 1978 where he and Margaret lived their lives woven deeply into the fabric of the community. Bill was a long-time member of Trinity Episcopal Church in Florence, Alabama, serving as Junior Warden for several years. He spent many days volunteering and working for the Habitat for Humanity ReStore, helping people in need to improve their housing. Bill was also a very active member of the Florence Exchange club, sponsoring many projects and serving as President.

Bill and Margaret lived their lives with a high sense of travel, adventure, and learning. A love of the outdoors often combined these things, where family vacations would be four kids and a dog in a station wagon, pulling a pop-up camper with a rowboat on top. Off to adventure to camp for a few weeks in the North woods of Minnesota or Canada, the Rocky Mountains, or even the Gulf

Coast and down to the Florida Keys. Bill raised his two sons pheasant hunting, and spent many weekends freezing in a tent on a boy scout campout during Nebraska winters. With retirement came the love of travel in a motor home, and he and Margaret traveled extensively across all fifty states, including two extended road trips to Alaska, to the Canadian maritime provinces, and even deep into Mexico inside the Sea of Cortez. They placed a special focus on spending time with their many grandchildren along the way. Nothing delighted the grandkids more than seeing their grandfather back their large motor home into the driveway with a smile and a hug. Several extended tours of Europe and the British Isles in England, Ireland, and of course Scotland. Bill and Margaret were touring France when 9/11 struck and changed our history. Not able to fly home, they spent several days in a hotel awaiting the chance to return home. He was accosted by a hotel employee, who asked if he was an American. When he acknowledged that he was, the woman looked at him and said, in rough English, "but you saved us." Bill just replied "well, we saved each other." She wept and swept he and Margaret into a long warm hug. Bill had a unique ability to connect with people, from boardroom executives in agri-business to housekeepers in a Parisian hotel. As lifelong learners, they frequently included an "Elderhostel" on their travels. These were week-long courses, typically taught by a university, where they immersed in history and culture of an area. From the history of NW Washington in Bellingham WA, to British history in Nova Scotia, to Cajun culture in Lake Charles, Louisiana they broadened their worldview and love of people from all walks of life and locations. Bill was highly intelligent, and extremely well versed in a broad range of subjects. Always a tall stack of books near at hand, he could discuss at depth anything from the development of mechanized farming, US and world history, world economics, and politics. If you ever disagreed with him in a frequent post-dinner discussion one quickly learned that you had better have your facts straight, because you could be sure his were. Yet he was always gracious about it.

Bill leaves us with quite a legacy, one rich in the people left behind and the values he imparted. We'll always smile when we think of his big heart, with a soft spot for kids and dogs, his big laugh, his generosity, and his big hands. He left behind an unshakable set of values that that taught us many things. To value all people. To get yourself educated in whatever you choose, and never stop learning. To work really hard, and be really, really good at whatever you choose. He once said "if you want to be a ditch digger, fine. Just make sure you are a really good ditch digger." To love people, love your wife, and love your family. To get out on the open road with your window down. And always carry a pocketknife. Bill was dearly loved and is missed by a great many people.

Austin & Bell Funeral Home in Springfield is in charge of these arrangements.

AUSTIN & BELL FUNERAL HOME-

509 WALNUT STREET, SPRINGFIELD, TN (615) 384-1000

Tribute Wall

NB

“ Margaret and I were in League of Women Voters together. I often encountered Bill at the Habitat for Humanity Restore. It was my honor, as organist at Trinity Episcopal Church, to play for both of their funerals. Noel M Beck

Noel M Beck - December 19, 2021 at 06:01 PM

DS

“ Dear Uncle Bill I will never forget You & Aunt Margaret. I can still hear your laughter & wise words.
It was a very nice visit with you when you came through our area with your motorhome. I will cherish the memories of the time we traveled to Florence and staying with you, complete with a trip to see the rockets. May you rest in peace Uncle Bill.

Dennis Sutherland - December 19, 2021 at 11:46 AM

AC

“ Sending love and prayers to the family. God bless each of you all.
Bruce Crenshaw, Ann

Ann Crenshaw - December 11, 2021 at 07:41 AM



“ 6 files added to the album Memories Album



Austin & Bell Funeral Home - December 10, 2021 at 10:17 AM