



Robert Paul Wilson

April 12, 1923 - December 16, 2020

Robert Paul Wilson: A Rancher's Story

Were it not for a little girl with the rhythmic name of Triphenia and her incredible story, Robert Paul Wilson would never have existed. But, of course, he did, dedicating a no-nonsense life to improving the land, the cattle, the horses, and sometimes the humans on his Bar 51 Ranch east of Fairland.

Born on April 12, 1923 in Berryville, Arkansas, Paul was the fourth and youngest son of Kit Carson and Ollie Myrtle Wilson, who raised sheep and goats at nearby Green Forest. Paul died on December 16 in his sleep at his Fairland home. He was buried December 29 on land he had given to the cemetery adjoining his beloved ranch. Paul was 97.

He graduated in 1942 from the School of the Ozarks at Hollister, Missouri, where he had arrived following a 40-mile ride on horseback. Before leaving a farm family who had let him stay overnight while on his ride to Hollister, Paul cleaned the barn and tackled other chores as a thank-you. The impressed farmer gave Paul a damaged pig. Later, he and Fred Wilson, a brother 13 years his senior, rumbled back in Fred's truck to get the prized pig. Paul looked up to Fred as a father figure, the closest he had.

At the esteemed work-for-study high school, Paul met Texas native Elaine Stallings. She drew his attention because, as he told a grandson decades

later, “I liked the way she moved on her feet.”

The year 1943 was a busy one. Paul married Elaine, fought back near-fatal doses of mumps and pneumonia while in basic training in Idaho with the Navy, and shipped off to war from Portland, Oregon, to the South Pacific Theatre.

Paul served as a gunner’s mate. Eager for adventure, he and crewmates – using a tire, a heavy rope wrapped three times around a bitt on the ship, and a jerry-rigged hook – wrestled aboard a great white shark. The shark wound up being sold to a Chinese restaurant in Australia. Regular action involved fighting the Japanese and transporting thousands of troops in the highly deadly, island-hopping campaign to save the free world.

The sailor returned home to Elaine in California in December 1945. After graduating from Arkansas Tech on the G.I. Bill, he began teaching on-the-farm agriculture to Fairland area veterans in 1948. In a greater sense, he taught himself and others for the rest of his life on the Bar 51 Ranch, established in ’51. Two years later, he began what would become a 25-year career at the B.F. Goodrich Tire plant in Miami. He worked the night shift, preserving the daylight hours for operating and improving his horse and cattle ranch.

A product of the Great Depression, Paul saved everything, from the old nails and screws to the metal milk cans that contained them. Flashback decades ago and you would see Paul proudly at the controls of his new 1972 Allis Chalmers tractor and Elaine at the rear, dropping Coastal Bermuda sprigs into a tin funnel behind a single-row disc. That tractor is still operating on the ranch. Some of the ranch’s Bermuda pasture came from his dad’s place in Green Forest, where Paul had noticed that it was doing splendidly there and figured it would, too, in northeastern Oklahoma. He was right.

Paul embraced best practices and innovation, including artificial insemination during its early years in the cattle business. His “genetic library” – stored

semen – is still being used today on the ranch.

He and Elaine square-danced for 40 years, do-si-do-ing from Fairland to Tennessee. Her students and the couple's children and grandchildren all learned the myriad of highly cadenced movements.

In his later years, those square-dancing moves brought joy and pain. Paul was an undefeated example of ranching injuries, too many to count or care to remember. One dated to 1976 when a "wild cow" ran under his favorite horse, Rip, pulling Paul under the steed and breaking his leg. This caused a permanent hitch in Paul's get-along. When a chronically bad knee popped out of its socket, he'd "grit up," force it back in place, and go on. Later, a bull backed up and stomped him in a loading chute, breaking his jaw and several ribs. He was 71 years old. Elaine fed him Thanksgiving dinner through a straw that year.

The grandsons revealed that their stern, deadbolt-reliable grandfather generously helped others get into and succeed in the ranching business. One grandson mentioned a woman, facing hard times, who sold her home to Paul. He gave it back to her, free and clear.

"I think the measurement of his success was how many people he had helped up. Everything I like about myself is part of him," grandson Rick Wilson said. He has operated the ranch since Paul and Elaine moved into Fairland in 2006. Elaine died in 2014, their 71st year of marriage. The retired science teacher was 90 years old.

"I miss her terribly," Paul told the grandson in a somber moment on the ranch.

The "city boy" grandson, Billy Layton, said his "fondest memories" are spending time on the ranch. "He made me feel I had a special place."

Grandson Rob Wilson said that Paul may have softened a bit. "He was always

caring throughout his life, but more so later. He remained frugal with himself.” Rob said “He would have had a cow if he’d known that his monthly cable bill was \$200 or his hearing aid cost \$4000.”

Remember Triphenia, the little girl with the rhythmic name? Triphenia Fancher was the 22-month-old daughter of Captain Alexander Fancher, who led a California-bound wagon train loaded with men, women, and children from four counties in Arkansas, including Carroll County, where Robert Paul Wilson grew up. The wagon train in southwestern Utah was attacked for days by Mormons.

On the sixth day, September 11, 1857, the Mormons gave a false promise of safe passage and massacred nearly all of the remaining emigrants. In all, 121 were murdered. Children under age seven were spared, reportedly because the Mormons decided they wouldn’t be “credible witnesses.” The Army eventually transported Triphenia, her brother, and the 15 other children back to Arkansas.

Robert Paul’s survivors include: a son, Paul William Wilson, his wife, Lily, seven grandchildren, Billy Layton, Rob Wilson, Lee Wilson, Rick Wilson, Louis Wilson, Sarah Martinez-Bowlby, and Jeff Bowlby, 13 great-grandchildren, and two great-great-granddaughters.

Services were placed in the care of Brown-Winters Funeral Home and Cremation Service in Fairland.

Friends and family may send the family notes of encouragement by viewing Paul’s Tribute Page at www.brown-winters.com.

Cemetery Details

Fairland Cemetery

Fairland, OK 74343

Previous Events

Viewing

DEC 28. 9:00 AM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Brown-Winters Funeral Home and Cremation Service (Fairland)
101 W. Conner
Fairland, OK 74343
(918) 676-3311
info@brown-winters.com
<https://www.brown-winters.com>

Celebration of Life

DEC 29. 2:00 PM (CT)

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Tribute Wall

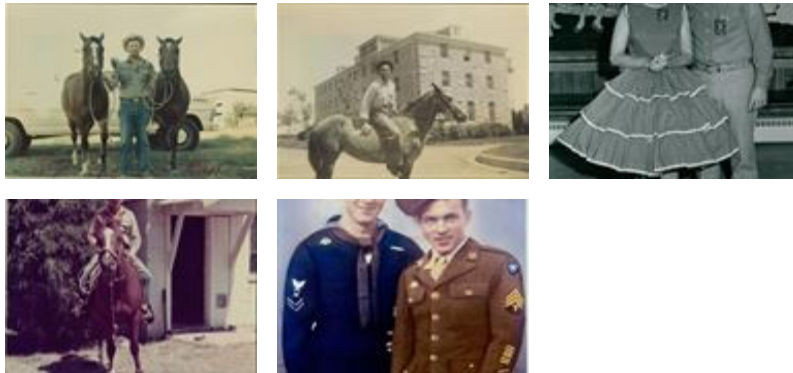
KP

“ hate to hear of the passing of Paul, my dad DK Powell bought from Paul his dads farm Kit Wilson and Paul made a lasting impression on me as a you man when he was back here in Green Forest, Paul was a classy guy and i listened to his stories and i did Kit's growing up and i can still here Kit telling the story of killing the Golden Eagle with a Rock that was killing his goats, thanks for letting me know Paul

kirk powell - January 02, 2021 at 06:44 PM



“ 81 files added to the album Life Tributes



Brown-Winters Funeral Home and Cremation Service - December 24, 2020 at 11:52 AM

SM

“ Rick so sorry to read this about Paul I know how you loved him prayers and lots of love...Sharlene Miser



Sharlene Miser - December 22, 2020 at 10:54 PM

WL

“ I’m so sorry to learn of the loss of Paul. I taught with his wife and son at Picher. My funniest memory of Paul was at a football game when he bought my sons chocolate candy bars!! I said “You’re the kind of guy that buys a kid a drum for Christmas “. At Christmas he bought little plastic mouse elves for my sons. One had a drum and the other had a axe and 🌲!! I still have them!! He sure could tell good stories.

wanda Lippe - December 21, 2020 at 10:01 PM

AL

Paul would attend the Fairland Senior Center often for meals...unless they were serving chicken. He hated chicken. LOL We enjoyed his stories. Everyone also commented about hearing Paul sing at Audrey's Wedding Chapel on Monday nights.

Ann Lynch - January 03, 2021 at 08:41 AM