



BJ Matthews

December 19, 1924 - November 14, 2020

Saturday, November 14, our Mighty Oak went down. If you asked BJ his age you would find yourself accepting an invitation to his 100th birthday party in December, 2024. When you greeted him with a "How are you doing?" He always came back with the prompt reply "As I am told." Yes, he was a character, all right. He was the patriarch of a huge and loving extended family, and was truly the "real deal."

Born near Calico Rock, Arkansas to Joe and Willie Matthews, he was the oldest of 5 children. He learned to be the boss at a very early age.

He served in the remount division of the quartermaster corps of the army in WWII immediately after high school graduation. The war ended after he trained 9000 mules and horses for the United States. He then found and married his "lady of all ladies," Geneva Gilliland, on Halloween Day, 1948. He lovingly appointed her "Boss Lady." They moved from Arkansas to Wenatchee in 1952 with their two toddlers, Irene and Loraine, in tow. They settled in the Squilchuck area and added dogs, cats, a bird, chickens, cows, pigs and two more girls, Melonye and Paulette, to the mix.

Moving to Wenatchee Heights in 1958, the new settlement blossomed with the comforts of a family home. He and Boss Lady continued with the dogs, cats, etc., adding more cows and horses. Finally they expanded to include cherry and apple orchards. He needed a new tractor and made such a good deal for himself that Valley Tractor management said, "Come work for us as we would rather have you making those kinds of deals in OUR favor." Ten years later he

became a full-time rancher, which had always been his dream.

The combination of farmer and businessman filled his cowboy hat to the brim as he literally was still wheeling and dealing on the day he died.

BJ left his ranch and moved to town a couple years ago so he could more easily obtain the care he needed as his cowboy weathered body slowed down. He often quipped "This is just a step closer" as he pointed to the neighboring cemetery.

He was a longtime member of Beehive Grange, Washington Cattlemen's Association, First United Methodist Church, Ramblin' Recs, and Masonic Lodge.

He is welcomed into heaven by daughters Irene (Duane) Smith, Melonye (Don) Shurtz, granddaughter Chelsey Firor, Boss Lady, his brother Steve Matthews, and sister Mauzel Beal. Survivors include daughters Loraine (Bob) Orach and Polly (Jerry) Firor, 8 grandchildren, 22 great-grandchildren, sister Betty Jane Perryman, brother Ed Matthews and a whole truck load of tightly knit nieces and nephews and their families. Five years ago he hosted a family reunion at his ranch. With 75 family members in attendance, our patriarch was in his reining glory.

With a personality larger than life, he embraced you, his dear friends. He took tremendous pleasure in "you seeing him" for burgers and fries, and maybe even discussing the next "great deal for him."

Thanks to all of you who adopted our papa as yours. Rest assured he loved each of you.

Our fallen oak leaves a big gap in our forest of knowledge, yet his legacy flourishes through us all. We look forward to when we can unmask and gather to share stories - laugh - and hug - and cry.

A private family service will be held. In lieu of flowers please donate to your favorite charity in his name or support your local businesses...and honor BJ by enjoying a hamburger and fries.

Tribute Wall

JE

“ Being “new” neighbors (6yrs) of BJ, we may not of had too many get togethers nor conversations but when we did, it was always a good time. He has imprinted into our lives and will always have a special place in our hearts. Having the same birthday as him, I will miss my time bringing him his German chocolate cake and celebrating together. You are cherished BJ and always will be remembered.

jessica - December 01, 2020 at 06:35 PM

CN

“ BJ was a very nice and understanding neighbor. I grew up on Wenatchee Heights. My brother had me searching the night skies for UFO's as a teen. One night I was driving home after dark and missed the corner below BJ's! I took out a section of his fence. I walked the rest of the way home in the dark. The next morning my dad went down to talk with BJ about my accident. BJ and my dad together repaired that fence. My sincere condolences to his family. Christee (Merchant) Neely

Christee L Neely - November 29, 2020 at 01:33 AM

SS

“ I just loved this man. He was the one person who kept my dad's memory alive for me. Every time we had a conversation he would tell me stories. I will always hold a special place in my heart for him.

Sue Uecker Stanton - November 28, 2020 at 09:01 PM

WM

“BJ and I had a great relationship. Whenever BJ would come to Stemilt's Grower Meetings, I knew that BJ was going to ask a question...most of the time to make a joke or poke fun at me. I remember during one of my 1st meetings that he took to the opportunity to point out that he didn't like our Attention Pool system that put soft cherries into a separate accounting pool, because the Attention Pool received less money per pound. My grandfather, Tom, didn't hesitate in responding by pointing out that we call it the Attention Pool, and now it has everyone's attention. It was a good laugh by everyone. Tom and BJ were good friends and had similar stories of coming out of the war. They worked many years together.

Even after BJ got out of farming cherries, we'd talk by phone and talk industry meetings. I will miss our conversations. BJ is one of the last of his generation. We all can learn so much from his entrepreneurial spirit and pursuit of Faith and Family. BJ and his generation had great fortitude that brought our country out of WW2 and put us on a path that we enjoy today. God bless you BJ, may you rest in peace.

West Mathison - November 24, 2020 at 03:40 PM

TS

“ My family and I were next door neighbors of BJ on Wheeler Hill for many years, we enjoyed his friendship and the friendship of the family. Terry Sebring, East wenatchee. On behalf of my Mom, Dolores Sebring, age 95, residing at Blossom Creek assisted living, My sister, Susan Sebring and brother, Eric Sebring, East Wenatchee.

BJ truly was one of a kind and a great neighbor. We will miss him. It was fun to run into him over the years and just talk. We attended his 90th birthday party and had some good laughs. I know Eric talked to him just last month about how our cherry Crop had went in 2020. We would run into him at coastal Farm and Ranch store, typically once a year, and have a good chat. Our condolences to your family.

terry sebring - November 24, 2020 at 03:15 PM



“ I would meet BJ annually for a few years for lunch. Last time at Arby's a couple years ago he was finishing his burger and fries as I arrived. You're late he said. No way would I be late to meet you I replied. I've been looking forward to this all week.

Let me check my computer he said, and removed his notebook from his front pocket. 'See that', he says. 'I was early'.

I will miss Mr. Matthews. A truly colorful character. Condolences to his family.

Steve Vaughan



Steve Vaughan - November 22, 2020 at 01:55 PM

JH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Jackie Hart - November 20, 2020 at 12:41 AM

RH

Worked with BJ at Valley Tractor... became friends forever... 1961 till 2020... never missed a chance to BS with BJ

Richard Honeysett - November 21, 2020 at 01:19 PM

VP

“ *I work for him short time ohme Road storage when it first opened under office manager Gale Quinn . My Father John Pickens told me BJ Matthews was a well-known Arkansas business entrepreneur in the valley, had sharp wit and a hell of a businessman who was always Wheeling and dealing. He was proud that I work for him. I thought he was a great big gentleman he always showed up in his overalls and cowboy hat going to his big desk behind his memorabilia and placard that said on his desk B J Matthews. I remember seeing him at Wendy's eating lunch often hamburgers and fries when in town doing business. I met his Ranch Hand and I can't remember his name but he treated him really well and he did all kinds tasks around that ranch and in town. This gentle giant always spoke well of his wife and was faithful to go visit her as she developed dementia it was hard on him. He made funny humorous remarks and a pleasure to know his daughter must be very proud daughter very proud*

Victoria Pickens - November 19, 2020 at 03:09 AM

LM

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Laura Middlekauff - November 18, 2020 at 10:39 PM

LM

Great-great niece Ana Beal and great-great nephew Jameson West talking to Uncle Billy Joe via video conference at the Matthews family reunion - July 2019

Laura Middlekauff - November 19, 2020 at 11:20 AM

SM

Never will forget the day I stopped off at the Matthews' home on my way to go skiing at Mission Ridge. B.J. knew I was there to see his daughters, and didn't seem to mind. His was a blessed journey through life.

Stan Morse - November 21, 2020 at 07:52 PM

SH

“ Syndie Hagar dt lit a candle in memory of BJ Matthews



Syndie Hagar dt - November 18, 2020 at 08:18 PM

KM

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Kevin Matthews - November 18, 2020 at 02:01 PM

JA

“ 2 files added to the album Memories Album



Janel - November 18, 2020 at 01:16 AM

JA

“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



Janel - November 18, 2020 at 01:15 AM

JA

“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



Janel - November 18, 2020 at 01:13 AM

JA

“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



Janel - November 18, 2020 at 01:12 AM

JA

“ 3 files added to the album Memories Album



Janel - November 18, 2020 at 01:11 AM

JA

“ 5 files added to the album Memories Album



Janel - November 18, 2020 at 01:10 AM

JA

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Janel - November 18, 2020 at 01:08 AM

JA

“ 1 file added to the album BJ



Janel - November 17, 2020 at 08:52 PM

KM

On the left is his brother Steve Matthews and the right is brother Ed Matthews

Kevin L Matthews - November 18, 2020 at 03:37 PM

JA

“ 1 file added to the album BJ



Janel - November 17, 2020 at 08:52 PM

ET

“ *Billy Joe was first my competitor but later a friend. He was a salesman for the Ford tractor dealer and later very successful businessman. We loved his family and B J'd humor*

Earl and Barbara

Earl Tilly - November 17, 2020 at 11:01 AM