

Russ Vessells

MAY 19, 1920 – SEPTEMBER 5, 2010



Russ was a loving, quiet, thoughtful man who knew right from wrong and chose right. He was an honest, sensitive, hardworking, self taught, caring, husband and father.

Russ grew up in Flint Michigan, having a very close relationship with his brother Lowell (Bud). He attended Flint Central High School graduating in 1939.

In October of 1941 he was recruited into the U.S. Army Signal Corp where he was soon stationed in British Guiana, South America during World War Two. There he maintained communication lines for the military as they headed to Africa.

After the war, Russ returned to his position at Michigan Bell Telephone Company in Ypsilanti, Michigan. In 1946 he took a young service representative to a picnic and this was the start of what eventually became a wonderful, loving relationship. One year later on July 19, 1947 he married Irene Clyne, who would be the love of his life and wife for 63 years.

Russ and Irene gave birth to five children: Sharman, Anne, (who was stillborn), Diane, Judy Beth, and Stephen. In 1951 they built their first home in Pontiac, Michigan. There they were excellent Christian role models, raising their children with loving care and guidance.

Russ and Irene were very active in Pontiac Central United Methodist Church. Russ worked in the nursery, and both he and Irene taught Sunday school for years. There they met lifelong friends in Christ.

In 1959 Russ and Irene signed a lease for Lot 109 on the northwest end of Lake Louise. On that location Henry Korthase constructed a log cottage in which the Vessells family spent their summers. Each June, the family headed to the cottage. Irene and the children spent the entire summer at the lake, while Russ commuted between work down state and the lake. Pop-corn was popped, fudge was stirred, marshmallows were burned, homemade donuts were fried, fish were cleaned, kids were pushed into the water, and the love of Russ and Irene was shared.

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Russ was skilled at wood working, electrical, and most any task on which he set his mind. From repairing pipe leaks under the cottage, to inventing a muck raker, to refurbishing a 1967 Austin Healey Sprite, to logging and planting gardens, Russ undertook the challenge and often involved the family. He was also always willing to help edit his children's book reports, play catch, wrestle on the floor, or listen and provide advice, if sought. He stood by his family completely. He was a patient man as he spent time teaching his children to swim and dive, solder pipes, and how to arrange plants in a garden among other things.

Russ didn't speak too often, but when he did have something to say, people generally listened. He loved to gently joke with his kids and those who were close. Most of all, Russ was a man after the heart of Jesus. As he once wrote to a daughter: "In these somewhat hectic days in the business world, it is sometimes easy to forget to let God do the leading. When I revert back to this, though, as I always do, things seem to smooth out. If it is His will, it will be done and otherwise it won't. It's that simple." He knew Christ's way was not only the best way, but the only way, and it was that narrow path that Russ walked.