



## William "Bill" Lawton

January 26, 1933 - July 12, 2019

William "Bill" Lawton

Jefferson, IA and Sun Lakes, AZ

Date of Death: July 12, 2019

William (Bill) Lawton, a longtime rural Jefferson farmer, passed away at Archstone Care Center on July 12, 2019, near their retirement home in Sun Lakes, AZ.

Services are set for Saturday, August 24, 2019 at First United Methodist Church in Jefferson: 10:00 am visitation, 11:00 am service, followed by a celebration of life lunch in the church Fellowship Hall. Later in the day there will be private interment in Jefferson Cemetery.

Instead of flowers, Bill and family request memorial donations to Greenbrier United Methodist Church (2203 J Ave., Bagley, IA 50026) and GiGi's Play House, a Downs Syndrome Achievement Center (6507 University Ave., Windsor Heights, IA 50324).

Bill was preceded in death by his parents, Harry and Dorothy (Shaw) Lawton and his sister Janice Chrones. He is survived by his wife, Jo Ella (Shearman); son Craig Lawton and his wife Alexandra Lanza of Daniel Island, SC; son Kurt Lawton and his partner Shelli Baufield of Eden Prairie, MN; son Tom Lawton and his wife Cae of Jefferson, IA; and son Rob Lawton and his partner Cesar Montoya of Annapolis, MD. Also surviving are eight grandchildren: Seth Lawton and wife Carol of Carlisle, PA; Brad Lawton and wife Jacalyn of Houston, TX; Nick Lawton of Columbus, OH; Monica Lawton of Oakland, CA; Matt Lawton of Truckee, CA; Tanner Lawton and wife Amber of Jefferson, IA; Tiffany (Lawton) Sohm and husband Wade of Grand Junction, IA; Trevor Lawton of Jefferson, IA; and six great-grandchildren (Lily, Ella, Tate, Harper, Hudson, Marcus). Two brothers are also surviving: Don Lawton and wife Elise of Houston, TX; and Bob Lawton and wife Bea of Waukee, IA.

Bill was born January 26, 1933, at his home near Cooper, IA. The family moved to a farm

near Jefferson in 1940. It was a time during the early days of rural electricity, of small acreages, chickens, a few milk cows, rural one-room schools and weekend card parties with neighbors. Bill started school in Cooper, then shifted to Jefferson, graduating in 1950. His high school years were filled with basketball and farm work. His most significant source of pride was his FFA work (received Iowa Farmer Award) and 4-H honors (top state livestock judge and team, county officer, and numerous cattle and hog show awards).

Following his mom's death shortly after graduation, he spent the first year keeping the farm going and helping his younger siblings. The following two years he spent in the Farm Operations program at Iowa State College before coming home to farm.

In October 1953, he married Jo Ella Shearman of Jefferson, with whom he shared 65 years of marriage. They had four sons: Craig, Kurt, Tom and Rob. His 45 years of farming were filled with challenges, from drought years to the 80s farm crisis, but he survived and thrived as the years progressed. Bill retired from farming in 1997 when he handed the reins of the Century Farm to son Tom. During his farming career, Bill shared and instilled leadership values in his sons that he learned in 4-H, FFA and team sports. He was recognized as Greene County Farmer of the Year in 1964. His community service ranged from local Greenbrier 4-H leader, Greene County 4-H committee and Fair Board to County Beef and Pork Producer Boards and Elks Lodge member. And he enjoyed playing fast-pitch softball and bowling weekly.

He was an avid sports fan who loved to teach and watch his kids and grandkids play sports. And his love for Iowa State University--where he and all four sons attended--lasted a lifetime. Bill and Jo Ella attended many football and basketball games over the decades, and still rooted for the Cyclones every week from Arizona in retirement.

Bill and Jo Ella's faith was essential, too, raising all four boys in the wonderful rural Greenbrier United Methodist Church. They were active members for 45 years, where Bill also served on the board. In retirement, they were members of the Sun Lakes United Methodist Church in Chandler, AZ.

Bill's health had diminished over the last decade, moving into assisted-living in 2015. The family was fortunate to all have a chance to say goodbye, as he was ready to end the chronic pain he suffered. He passed peacefully. His legacy of life lessons--the importance of family, hard work, humble leadership, teamwork, helping others, and appropriate behavioral consequences--will live on for generations.



# Cemetery

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# Events

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**Jefferson Cemetery** **AUG 24** **Visitation with family present to greet friends** 10:00AM - 10:45AM

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1019 East Lincoln Way  
Jefferson, IA,

First United Methodist Church  
307 South Wilson Street, Jefferson, IA, US, 50129

**AUG 24** **Celebration of Life** 11:00AM

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First United Methodist Church  
307 South Wilson Street, Jefferson, IA, US, 50129

# Comments

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“ I was so sorry to hear of your loss. Bill was a great guy and will be remembered for his smile and jovial countenance. Sending love and condolences to Jo and family. Mary (Peninger) Droel.

**Mary Droel** - July 16, 2019 at 08:31 PM

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“ Dick has many memories of Bill and family. So very glad we were able to visit with all of you last winter. What fun it was! Great memories. Comfort and peace to Jo and family. Sincerely Dick and Nedra Justice

**Dick and Nedra Justice** - July 12, 2019 at 05:26 PM