



William "Bill" Chester Bess, Jr

June 13, 1936 - November 29, 2025

William "Bill" Bess, Jr.

William Chester "Bill" Bess, Jr. was born on Saturday, June 13, 1936, in Bloomfield, Stoddard County, Missouri, in a small family home that had no electricity and no running water. At the age of four, his family moved to Dexter, Missouri, where he grew up. Bill was a proud Dexter Bearcat, playing football for Dexter High School before going on to play for the University of Missouri Tigers. He graduated from Dexter High School in 1954 and later earned his Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from the University of Missouri, finishing number two in his graduating class, and later going on to achieve his CPA.

Over the course of his life, Bill worked many jobs and lived in many places, each stop adding layers to the rich and varied life he built. In his early years he worked on the assembly line at the Ford plant in Michigan, and he spent many later years in fine retail management—a career that took him to Arkansas, Kansas City, and Florida before he eventually settled in Oklahoma in the 1970s, where he built the life he would cherish for the rest of his days.

Bill married Jantha "Kay" Hickam on June 8, 1956, in Columbia, Missouri. Together they welcomed two sons, his most cherished lifetime achievement: Craig Lawson Bess in March 1962 and Andrew David Bess in January 1966.

On September 12, 1988, Bill married the love of his life, Norma Joan Chandler

Terry, in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. Their partnership was a remarkable one—steadfast, joyful, and deeply devoted. In 1991, they welcomed their granddaughter Aulbry into their home, raising her together as their own and building a family bond that shaped all of their lives.

Bill had many passions that filled his days with purpose and joy. He was an avid golfer and a longtime member of Indian Springs Country Club. He enjoyed bass fishing and was active member of the Bass Fishing Club for many decades. He was also a remarkably skilled Bridge player—so skilled, in fact, that he earned the prestigious title of American Contract Bridge League Life Master, an achievement reached by only a small percentage of competitive Bridge players. Attaining Life Master status requires years of tournament play, strategic mastery, and the accumulation of thousands of competitive points; it stands as a testament to Bill's sharp mind, discipline, and love of the game.

Bill passed from this life on Saturday, November 29, 2025, surrounded by his loving family, at 89 years of age.

He is survived by his wife, N. Joan Bess, of the home; his sons, Craig L. Bess of Dallas, Texas, and Andrew Bess of Tulsa, Oklahoma; stepdaughter, Sugar Love, nee N. "Cathy" Terry; his granddaughter, Aulbry, and her husband Shelby Stark; and his treasured great-grandchild B. He is also survived by his sister, Mary Ann Stevenson of St. Petersburg, Florida.

Bill was preceded in death by his parents, William "Chester" Bess, Sr. and Ruth Mae (Sielert) Bess.

His life was long, full, and extraordinarily well-lived. He leaves behind a legacy of love, resilience, humor, and unwavering devotion to his family.

In honor of Bill's wishes, no funeral will be held.

In lieu of flowers, please carry on his legacy by: thinking of him anytime you wear a nice golf polo, smoking a Macanudo cigar in his honor, or going bass fishing. Root for Mizzou football, drop a silly Yogi Berra quote any chance you get, play a round of golf with your best friends on an early Saturday morning, take a nap in your recliner in the middle of the day with the calm sounds of a golf tournament on TV, drink a V8 with your breakfast, and listen to Aerosmith whenever you get the chance.

Tribute Wall

RP

“ I've known Bill ever since he started working at AMI back in 1992. Got to know him really well playing golf together and shooting the - hit with him about everyday. I got the honor to play with Bill a lot of times. I will miss him deeply. He was a good man and loved his tigers. May he rest in peace. Roy T Pilgrim

Roy T Pilgrim - December 02, 2025 at 05:51 PM

AU

Thank you so much Roy! I've shared this with Joan, and this made us both smile. Your name is one I remember fondly!

Aulbry - December 07, 2025 at 03:51 PM

SB

“ So sorry to hear of Bill's passing. My family always talks about the time that Bill saw my son in the Kmart Restroom. My son was around 6-10 and Bill said "I know you mom" to him. LOL My son came rushing back to me and Bill was following not far behind him laughing. He was lovingly know to my family as "Chester" from that point on. :-)
There are so many stories for Bill and they all make me smile!

Sue Brittain - December 02, 2025 at 12:22 PM

AU

Aw Sue! So good to see your name on here, and know that you and Cameron remember his silliness hahah

Aulbry - December 07, 2025 at 03:50 PM



“ 3 files added to the album *Memories Album*



Hayhurst Funeral Home - December 01, 2025 at 02:49 PM