



# Robert Russell

JAN 17, 1924 - JAN 20, 2026



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**R**obert Paul “Bob” Russell hesitantly left this world on January 20, 2026, three days after celebrating his 102nd birthday. He was born in Indianapolis, Indiana to Herbert C. Russell and Mary Mae Moore Russell on January 17, 1924. This Midwest city served as his home base for the next 50 years. His early years were affected by the Great Depression, causing much hardship and housing insecurity to many families including his own. At a very young age, Bob worked construction with his father, first doing job site cleanup and eventually becoming a skilled carpenter by his teens. He also worked in the family poultry business, all while attending school.

With the entry of the United States into the Second World War, Bob was anxious to serve his country and at the age of 17 aced the physical and academic tests necessary to enlist in the U.S. Army Air Corps. Once graduated from high school, he attended flight training programs for the Air Corps and in May of 1944 was awarded his pilot wings and promoted to Flight Officer. His first assignment was to the 387th Squadron of the 365th Fighter Group, “The Hell Hawks”. The unit stationed in Stafford, England, flew the rugged P47 Thunder Bolts, nicknamed “The Jug.” Having helped the Army Air Corps establish air superiority, the 387th Squadron was a principal support unit to General Patton’s Third Army during the Battle of the Bulge in the winter of 1944. Bob flew a total of 13 missions in the European theater before his plane was shot down over the Elbe River in Germany. Though suffering from wounds to his legs, he was able to belly the P47 down in an area held by British, French and US forces ending up in the Army field hospital. After recuperating in Paris, Bob was assigned to the 43rd Supply Group, recovering and shipping Army Air Corps equipment out of Germany. He returned to Indiana when his tour ended in August 1946.

Bob was forever thankful for the GI Bill which allowed him to attend Indiana and Butler Universities and gain a degree in Education. After one year of teaching, he used his Air Corps savings to start a business constructing homes. During his career Bob built over 4000 homes from Indianapolis and Central Indiana to the Clearwater-Dunedin Florida area. During his 45



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plus years in Dunedin he bought and operated a roofing company and continued to build and lease houses.

Bob is survived by his children Victoria Russell-Webber (Steve) of Lebanon, IN; Paula Russell (Jimmy) of Royal Oak, MI; Diane Russell (Cathy) of Ithaca, NY; Dan Russell (Sue) of Tarpon Springs, FL; and Linda Elliott (Travis) of Dunedin, FL. In addition, he loved and enjoyed his grandchildren Amy, Matthew, Eric, Thor, Simone, Claire, Louis, and Alexander

along with his seven great grandchildren. He was predeceased by his brothers, Joe Bailey and Arvin Russell, eight half brothers and sisters, and grandson, Rusty.

Those who knew Bob, knew he was quick with a smile, an entertaining story and a cold beer. He was a self-made man, full of life, adventure and fun whether he was hunting moose in Canada, fishing for sailfish off the coast of South America, playing cards at a casino or sitting on his front deck talking with friends. Most often this included his best friend and neighbor, Cecil Rupnaraine. He enjoyed people and conversation and could hold court with the best of them. Above all, he loved his life in Dunedin and those he called family and friends.

His family will always remember the many tributes and honors bestowed upon this heroic World War II veteran throughout the years. From Dunedin VFW Post 2550, to the City of Dunedin and its officials, to the outpouring of love and respect from the hundreds of vehicles and people who joined the drive-by parade to wish him a Happy 102nd Birthday, we thank you.

Our father loved life and made the most of his 102 years. It was a life well lived, for a man well loved.

Please join Bob's family for a party and celebration of his life at 5:00 pm Sunday, March 1, 2026 at the VFW Post 2550, 360 Douglas Ave, Dunedin FL 34698. Please consider making a donation in his memory to VFW Post 2550 at the above address.



# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Robert by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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