



Cecil H. Miller Jr.

One of Arizona agriculture's most dedicated advocates, Cecil H. Miller, Jr., passed away peacefully on Oct. 2 at home amid family. Born Nov. 6, 1927 at St. Joseph Hospital in Phoenix to Cecil H. Miller, Sr. and Phyllis Hickey Miller, he attended Franklin and Kenilworth Grade Schools, North Phoenix High School and Texas A&M before graduating from the University of Arizona in 1949 with a BS in Animal Husbandry and a minor in Commercial Law. So valuing the education he garnered at the U of A, he and his wife would later endow the Dean's Chair of Excellence in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as a gift to their alma mater. With his father, Cecil Sr., and brother, Duane, he farmed and ran a feedlot in Tolleson, had large cattle ranches in Cottonwood and Flagstaff, and he later developed a diversified farming operation in the San Joaquin Valley of California.

When he married his beautiful bride, Alzora Benton, in 1950, he built her a home in Tolleson where he served first on the elementary and later on the high school Board of Trustees. He was also elected to the presidency of the Tolleson Community Farm Bureau, which began his lifelong service to the industry. Over the next decade, he led an agricultural coalition to craft Arizona's Agricultural Labor Relations Act with the help of a young attorney named John Kyl. Throughout his years with the Farm Bureau, he served a broad number of offices, most notably as president of the Arizona Farm Bureau for more than two decades and vice-president of

the American Farm Bureau Federation. He also chaired the Board of Western Farm Bureau Management Corp. and was president of Western Ag Insurance Co., Multi-States Insurance Service Company of Arizona and Western Farm Bureau Management Corp. He helped forge a great alliance between Arizona and California Farm Bureaus, creating an opportunity to wield more influence in national matters for the West.

Cecil was a member of Governor Jack Williams' Land Use Study Commission, and of Governor Bruce Babbitt's representatives on the Groundwater Study Commission and the Rangeland Advisory Committee. Governor Fife Symington named him to the State Compensation Insurance Fund Board of Directors. Later he would work out a program with State Fund to create a group dividend that saved Farm Bureau employers over \$20 million in the cost of workers' compensation insurance and became a model for other business groups.

Mr. Miller was a leader in groups and associations that worked to bring water from the Colorado River into Central Arizona and improved trade and commerce with Mexico. He served on the Arizona Historical Society, Mountain States Legal Foundation, Arizonans for Jobs and Energy, Arizona Tomorrow, Inc., Valley Leadership, Inc., and Center for Rural Leadership. He was past chairman of Maryvale Rotary and sponsor of Estrella Rotary. He served on the Theodore Roosevelt Council of the Boy Scouts, Great Northwest BSA, Valley of the Sun School, Salt River Project, US Bureau of Land Management Public Lands Advisory Council, Arizona Navigable Streams Adjudication Commission, District Export Council, Advisory Council for the Arizona Cotton Growers Assn. and National Cotton Council. He was a board member for the Arizona Academy, Arizona Cattle Feeders Assn., Arizona Cattle Growers Assn., Arizona Environmental Planning Commission, Arizona Groundwater Mgmt. Commission, Heard Museum, Herberger Theater, San Pueblo School for Boys and Arizona 4-H Youth Foundation.

His work on the national level included speaking and testifying on behalf of the American Farm Bureau, working to expand agricultural trade opportunities, fundraising and advising on legal advocacy and impacting policy on federal lands. Under the direction of AFBF Presidents Grant, Delano and Kleckner, Cecil served on trade missions to Israel, Switzerland, Russia, Japan, Denmark and France.

For all his hard work on the farms and ranches and his vast civic obligations, it must be noted that Cecil and Alzora also enjoyed a rich and vibrant social life. It was said that their so-called "Summit Meetings" in Flagstaff were legendary.

Their circle of friends was large and fun with frequent gatherings sometimes even in exotic locales. Their trip of a lifetime took them around the world on the Concorde at a time when it was a rare opportunity. Dad was able to return to Africa, and he enjoyed it all the more the second time around. Throughout his life he enjoyed fishing, and when time permitted, he had great adventures with his son, sons-in-law and even some of his grandchildren - most recently in the wilds of Alaska.

Mr. Miller received innumerable awards and achievements, but none compared to the joy he professed for the family he and Alzora built. Although he met 5 or 6 United States Presidents, represented the US livestock interests in the Gatt talks, met President Gorbachev in the former USSR and various other dignitaries around the world, he was happiest at his beloved ranch in Flagstaff, sitting on the front porch in the evening, pointing out the elk making their way onto the lake. Always eager to share the beauty of that ranch he was quick to plan a picnic up on Woody Mountain or down on the "Rim" overlooking Sedona in the distance. He could entertain anyone who cared to listen with stories of his or his ancestors' pasts and the history of Arizona. When any of his children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren entered the room, his eyes would light up and he seemed truly satisfied with life at that moment.

Cecil had a kind heart and always did his best to be fair, and he was unwavering when it came to integrity and loyalty. He was generous with all he felt fortunate to have. With his love of people he was quick to engage and often, if you left a conversation doubting the veracity of what you had been told, more often than not, Cecil was right. In this life, he gave far more than he received on every level.

Many will miss Cecil, but none more than his beloved children: Deborah and Ted Sheely, Cecily and Scott Buell, Ellen Luckey, Matthew and Kimberly Miller, and grandchildren: Ryan (Cindy), Katie Zoe, Zachary (Dana), Evan (Nikki), Gwendolyn (Greg), Benton (Bjorn), Chase, Jacob (Heather), Morgan, Austin, Sydney, Averi and Ian, and great-grandsons: Holden and Walker. He also leaves behind his brother Duane Miller and wife Beverly. He was preceded in death by his life's love, Alzora, and one grandson.

A memorial service will be held November 16 at 10:30am at the Church of Litchfield Park, 300 N. Old Litchfield Road in Litchfield Park. In lieu of flowers a scholarship fund has been set up through the Arizona Farm Bureau (AFB Education Farming Co., 325 S. Higley Road, Suite 210, Gilbert, AZ 85296, (480)635-3607).