

Lester Arthur "Les" Gore

March 26, 1925 - June 1, 2016

Lester Arthur "Les" Gore, 91, was born Thursday, Mar. 26, 1925 in Marshall to parents Elmer Ellsworth and Sarah Agnes (Robinson-Ashley) Gore. Les passed away Wednesday, June 1 in a four wheeler accident.

He was raised on the family ranch at Marshall; his schoolhouse now sits on the Iverson Museum grounds in Laramie. As with all rural students, he left the ranch during the week to attend high school. He graduated from University Prep in 1943, where he excelled as a basketball player.

He joined the United States Navy and left Christmas Day, 1943. He attended gunner and torpedo school where he received honors as a top marksman. He was then sent to the US Cabot where he was the only 2nd class ordinance gunner. He flew off of Cabot during the Iwo Jima and Okinawa campaigns. Les never talked much about the war, only that he lost all his war buddies over there. He did tell about hitchhiking from Philadelphia back to Laramie when his leave was extended at the end of the war. He was honorably discharged in 1946 and two days later he started his rodeo career at the University of Wyoming. He won many honors and went on to rodeo every chance he got.

In 1947, he married Louise Jackman and they ranched on the Little Medicine for Max Waring and Dick Burnett. Three children, Linda, Larry, and Lorie were born to this union. They later lived in Laramie where Les had various jobs, including firefighter for 4 and a half years as well as owning a salvage yard. Les was always involved in some way with rodeo, whether as a stock contractor or by competing. Les also kept his foot in ranching as he always had cattle, sheep, and horses.

In 1949, Pete Burns, Jim R. White, and Les formed the Summit Rodeo, providing the stock at the first NFR in 1950. After selling Summit, Les continued in the rodeo stock business.

At Cheyenne Frontier Days 1949, aboard John T. the third, he won the Amateur Bronc riding with a spectacular ride. Artist John Mariani painted a cover picture depicting the ride for the Western Horseman's magazine; this image was eventually made into a bronze by James Collender. Les' circuit included rodeos such as Calgary, Madison Square Garden, Boston, San Francisco, Fort Worth, Tucson, Dallas as well as all local ones. Les started his rodeo career when the RCA (PRCA) was a grass roots organization. His card (66C) was purchased in 1950. He worked both ends of the arena, competing in all three rough stock events and steer wrestling. The horse Broadway Bill took Les to the highest marked ride in the RCA at El Paso in 1963. Les' first NFR qualification came in 1963 but, due to injuries at San Francisco, he was unable to compete. 1965 brought him back to the NFR in bareback riding where

he competed in his last professional rodeos at Greeley, Laramie, Douglas and Steamboat.

Les was instrumental in starting the National Old Timers Rodeo Association in 1979 and won numerous bareback, steer wrestling, and all-round honors. He also was arena director for most of the NOTRA finals. He finally gave up riding at age 64 after winning the bareback ranking for the year and became a NOTRA Hall of Fame inductee. He continued to support the PRCA by putting on the Platte County Rodeo and served two, four-year, terms on the Fair Board. He continued to put Wyoming Rodeo Association and NSPR events on at Wheatland. Les' passion for the sport of rodeo also found him judging prestigious PRCA rodeos as well NOTRA, college, and high school rodeos, including the National High School Rodeo Finals. As Les got older, his passion for rodeo remained with his step-children and made sure they got to a rodeo and had good horses to ride.

He was a cowboy in the Marilyn Monroe movie Bus Stop. He had to go to Hollywood, where they had a big dinner and he said that was the most uncomfortable he has ever been. Everyone in tux and gowns and they made him wear a shirt, jeans, and hat. He did meet all the stars including John Wayne. Les was the star of a television episode in the Wide World of Sports series Danger is My Business.

He went back to ranching by working for Oppenheimer Industries' cattle management operations and moving to the ranch NW of Wheatland, where he and his wife, Kay, resided for 46 years. They continued leasing other properties and running yearlings, including two years at the Medicine Bow Ranch running 10,000 steers.

Les was inducted into the Wyoming Cowboy Hall of Fame in 2014. At the 2015 NFR, he was the oldest living NFR bareback rider and his Gold Card number 66 was the second lowest number.

Those he left behind are wife Kathleen "Kay" of Wheatland; daughters, Linda Martin (Tom) of Laramie, Lorie Christy of Nampa Idaho, Debbie Kersting of Wheatland; sons, Larry Gore (Marian) of Laramie and Mark Kersting (Connie) of Wheatland; six grandchildren, Erik, Kyle, Jennifer, and Tracy Gore, Jeri Lynn DeVore, and Michael Brown; and five great grandchildren. He was so proud of all his children and grandchildren and really enjoyed the great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his father, Elmer; mother, Sarah; brothers, John and Frank; and sons-in-law Bob Sutherland, Jerry Brown, and Dan Christy.

Services will be held Tuesday, June 7 at 10:30 a.m. at the Platte County Fairgrounds arena in Wheatland with interment at the Wheatland Cemetery. Sherry Madden will