



Walter Sanders Russell Jr.

AUG 10, 1926 - DEC 22, 2012



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Rudder
Funeral Homes

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August 10, 1926 - December 22, 2012

Harness Racing Hall of Famer Walter Russell chose to make his mark in harness racing in the judges' stand instead of on the track. He died in Atlanta on Dec. 22, 2012 at the age of 86. Mr. Russell, who lived in Atlanta for many years but frequently visited his hometown of Stevenson, Ala., suffered a massive heart attack on Saturday, Dec. 15. Visitation will be Thursday, 5-7 PM CT at Rudder Funeral Home in Stevenson, AL. Funeral services will be held Friday, Dec 28, at 1:00 pm in Stevenson, AL at the First United Methodist Church officiated by Rev. Bill Stone. Burial will follow in the Stevenson Cemetery.

Walter Sanders Russell Jr. was the son of Hall of Famer Sanders Russell and he began working with horses at a young age on the family farm in Stevenson. He traveled with his parents to race meets across the northeast, especially the Grand Circuit stops. One of Mr. Russell's brightest memories was jogging a promising filly, Fresh Yankee, the 1970 Horse of the Year, developed at Russell Stables. He also helped his father with AC's Viking, the 1962 Hambletonian winner of harness racing's grandest trophy. But the judges' stand was where he crafted a career. Due to his background in every aspect of harness horse care and training, Mr. Russell became known as a judge who was knowledgeable but also had no tolerance for nonsense on the track. He set high standards in the judges' stand and mentored those with whom he worked. He had the respect of horsemen universally. He never raised his voice and always treated others as he would expect to be treated. Judge Russell was never impressed with power or authority; rather, he doled out fair and equitable justice for those matters requiring attention

Mr. Russell was also keenly interested in learning and, after graduating from Stevenson High School, he obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of



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Alabama, a Master of Arts in music from Peabody College, a Master's degree in music from Vanderbilt University, and a doctorate degree in Humanities from Emory University. He taught classes at the university level at four schools and while a state steward for the Maryland Racing Commission, Mr. Russell taught English courses at American University in Washington, D.C. He also attended the famed Julliard School for music in New York City and was an accomplished pianist who regaled friends and family with impromptu concerts of favorites, never failing to play any melody requested. He was keenly interested in politics and enjoyed entertaining people with humorous quips on timely topics.

He was in demand as a conversationalist and equally at ease on the backstretch or the boardroom with unmatched wit and humor. "I once thought that if I had much title to excellence in this sport, it would have been as a groom," said Mr. Russell in 2011, when he was inducted into the Harness Racing Hall of Fame.

He was once referred to in Hoof Beats Magazine as Harness Racing's Google, because of his command of facts about horses and people making up the sport's history and present. To many of the historic events he was personally a witness; he could, and would, joyfully and wittily relate the stories of that history.

To his family he was loyal, cared greatly for the family farm and was ever interested in the details of the lives of every member on the tree, no matter their age or how far from his branch their connection. He showed similar interest in the lives and backgrounds of strangers as well, especially those who cared for him in his last days. He cared very much about diversity and tolerance.



Events

Walter Sanders Russell Jr.

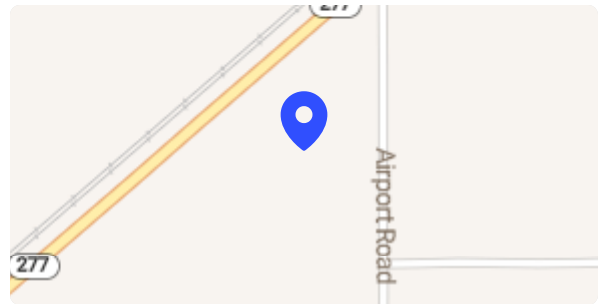
AUG 10, 1926 - DEC 22, 2012

First Visitation


 **Thursday**, December 27, 2012

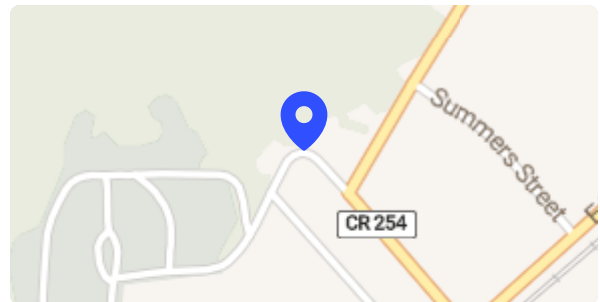
 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM CT

 **Rudder Funeral Home - Stevenson**
45015 AL Hwy 277, Stevenson AL 35772



Cemetery Details

 **Stevenson City Cemtery**
McMahan Cove Rd, Stevenson AL 35772





Memories only last if you share them

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



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