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Celebrating THE LIFE OF



WILLIAM HERMAN COTHAM

September 29, 1934 ~ February 10, 2023

William Herman Cotham, 88, of Scott, passed away on Friday, February 10th, 2023.

He was born September 29th, 1934, in Little Rock to William Cotham Sr and his wife, Elizabeth.

In 1936 the family relocated to Scott, AR where they moved in with their uncle, Walter Blann, and took over the operation of his general store, which then became Cotham Mercantile.

“Bill”, as he was known, grew up during the post-depression era in Scott, a small, close-knit farming community located approximately 10 miles southeast of North Little Rock. Bill attended Scott Elementary School and later completed high school at Little Rock Central where he served on the student council his senior year, graduating in 1952. During his childhood and teens he worked at the mercantile and farms which included his Uncle Walter’s 380 acres of cotton and soy beans. Outside of school and work, Bill loved the outdoors and hunted and fished the many wooded areas and lakes in the vicinity and also enjoyed swimming and watersports.

In 1955, Bill joined the US Army and served in the 7011th SU Military Police Detachment at Fort Myer, Virginia. During his tour, Bill was selected to guard President Dwight D. Eisenhower while at Walter Reed Army Hospital. President Eisenhower, upon learning of Bill’s exemplary appearance and conduct while carrying out his duties, requested that he be awarded a citation for his outstanding performance.

While serving in DC, Bill wed his first wife, Marilyn. He left the military in 1957 and returned home to Scott where he purchased Cotham Mercantile from his father in 1958. Marilyn and Bill were blessed with a son in July of 1958, Clayton Neil Cotham.

Cotham Mercantile served the Scott community and farmers under Bill’s ownership, providing groceries, all manner of hardware, automotive parts, paint, fishing gear and clothing. He often delivered groceries to families in need at no charge and became known for caring for those less fortunate.

Bill was an active supporter of Boy Scout Troop 268 in Scott and assisted with camping excursions and activities on numerous occasions.

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Bill was a passionate, lifelong collector of antique weapons, particularly those from the Revolutionary and Civil War periods, and served a number of years as president of the Arkansas Gun and Cartridge Collectors Club and show master. He was widely recognized as an authority in the field, and gladly shared his enthusiasm, knowledge and expertise with others, young and old alike. He was known for making his own muzzle loading rifles, powder horns and Bowie knives by hand, many of which were nearly indistinguishable from the originals. Bill was also highly regarded as an expert marksman.

Bill divorced in 1976 and later married his second wife, Suzy. In 1984, he and Suzy cleared out a section of the mercantile, added tables, chairs and a kitchen, and Cotham’s Country Store and Restaurant was born. Since then, their simple fare of Hubcap Hamburgers, Mississippi Mud and plate lunches became nationally known, serving Governor and later President Clinton, politicians, celebrities, foreign dignitaries and people from all over the country and abroad, right alongside the farmers and community members of Scott.

Bill retired in the mid 90s and sold the store and restaurant, and continued pursuing his passion of buying, selling and trading antique weapons, all the while mentoring a new generation of antique weapons collectors and enthusiasts.

Through it all, Bill had a wonderful sense of humor and loved to make people smile, whether it be with a joke or through his kindness toward others. He was a dedicated, loving husband and father who always put family first and foremost, and he will be deeply missed and dearly remembered.

Bill was preceded in death by his parents William Sr and Elizabeth and wives Marilyn and Suzy.

He is survived by son Clayton Neil Cotham and his wife, Maggie.

Visitation is 10:00 am - 12:00 pm, followed by funeral service at 12:00pm, Saturday, February 18, 2023 at Smith North Little Rock Funeral Home. Entombment will be at Rest Hill Memorial Park.