

By Judy Allen

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Cecil and Mary Bell celebrated 72 years of marriage in April 2018. They are cheerful toward each other and both like to travel. Family and friends are important to the couple. Their long life together has created memories, and their home displays pictures of many of the memories.

They were blessed with three children, Lynda Kaye Bell Capezaro, Diana Sue Bell Guidry, and Kenneth Harlon Bell. Lynda is the only one still living.

Cecil said a message he would like to leave future generations of his grandchildren, great grandchildren and beyond is: "To be a good American! Know you are lucky you live in a place where there is freedom!" He said his wife, Mary had a wreath on the front porch that says a great thing, "Home of the Free, BECAUSE of the BRAVE!"

Cecil is very patriotic. He and his family have a history of military service. He served in WWII. His dad served in WWI.

The story of how he signed up for service is a little complicated . . . Cecil ran away from home when he was 15 or 16. He "hoboed" to California, then to Houston, Texas, getting odd jobs. He liked working on dairy farms. He worked at Houston at dairy farms for about a year. "I milked a lot of cows! At first, the cows all looked alike, but after a while, I could tell each of them apart. They all have different personalities and different looks."

When Cecil came home to Hugo, his dad talked him into joining the National Guard. It wasn't long before they were mobilized and Cecil was headed overseas. He was in the 45th Division and was decorated for his participation in a lot of campaigns. Medals and citations at his home include the Bronze Star.

Loading up with his war buddies to come home on a ship, he tucked a little Feist dog into his bag and brought it home. The little dog, Utica, and been through several invasions, including the Siegfried line. In fact, she had puppies in one of the gun trailers while traveling to the battlefield.

"When they got off the ship, the Red Cross had ladies serving doughnuts and coffee. Cecil said they gave the dog doughnuts and milk!" said Mary.

Cecil began going to night school and got a job as a line man with the public service company. He and Mary were married in 1946. "We met at a dance in October and were married the next June," said Mary.

"I met her when she was a little girl," said Cecil. "She says she doesn't remember."

Mary laughed, "That doesn't count – that was at a ballgame at Goodland when I was about six years old. I had gone with my dad. The Goodland boys had a good ball team. That day the boys were playing the Goodland girls. I got hit in the chest with a ball and it knocked the wind out of me. When I came awake, my dad was holding me and someone said 'that Bell boy hit that ball'."

In their younger years, Mary said she was raised west of Hugo on 280 acres. Cecil was raised near Hugo on farm land where they grew corn and peanuts. They had two ponds, one with fish in it. They had cows and milked three of them. "We raised a big garden and always had a big watermelon patch."

Cecil said, "Our family had a heritage of protecting the country. Daddy was in WWI, I was in WWII. My brother Walter was in Korea, my son Bobby was in the Air force in Berlin. All of us were veterans." He said, "I hope to be remembered as a man who loved his country."

Nicknamed "Ding Dong" because of the last name Bell, Cecil had was known far and wide in the service by the funny name. Even after he got home, his friends tended to use that name instead of his real one. One trip the couple took to Houston, they ran across Captain Fain, one of Cecil's WWII buddies. "Ding Dong Bell! I never would have thought of you!" said the Captain, and insisted on taking them home to meet his wife, and toured them around city. In fact, the Captain let Cecil drive his brand-new car. "We have had friends from all over look us up and come see us," said Cecil. "And we have looked up some of them, too!" said Mary.

"We looked up another Captain in Minnesota," said Cecil. It is obvious Cecil had a lot of friends he could count on during and after his service in the military.



Cecil looks at a 180th Infantry book that holds the names of men who were killed in WWII, as well as photos of many of the people he served with



Cecil holds a dagger decorated with the party eagle of the Schutzstaffel (SS). He got it off a Storm Trooper after he surrendered in Munich, Germany. Cecil said the daggers were a part of the dress uniform of all of Hitler's bodyguards.



Mary and Cecil Bell of Hugo, Oklahoma have been married 72 years.