



## Russell M. Unger

April 21, 1933 - February 4, 2022

Early February 4, 2022 Russell Merle Unger passed from this life onto Heaven. Russ was born April 21, 1933 in La Junta, CO to Orlando Jacob and Erma (Hartzler) Unger.

The family moved to Pueblo CO where he attended school there, graduating his junior year from Central High School in 1950. At age 12 he started working at the local bowling alley setting the pins up in the back. He also worked at Skateland Roller Rink there, and was a member in the Professional Roller Skating Rink Operators Association of America. Teaching some skaters that went on to the National Championships. He told many stories of his shenanigans growing up!

Russ was drafted into the Army in April 1953, trained at Fort Riley Kansas as a field wireman, then stationed in Wertheim Germany until April 1955. He did some traveling during his time there. After his discharge, he moved to Fresno where his parents had moved.

In August 1955 he was hired as an installer at Western Electric. While working there he noticed a young operator Carol Watts, and wanted to meet her. One night she went with friends to the roller skate rink on Blackstone. Well so happened he worked there as a floor manager, he asked her to skate with him and she did. They were married August 25, 1956, and celebrated 65 years of

marriage last year. After having their four kids they moved from Fresno to Auberry in 1968. Commuting to downtown Fresno for work he drove like a Nascar driver in his green MG or yellow Datsun 240Z! His CB handle was the Green Hornet. He loved going to the races in the valley, and had races on the TV every weekend. Even got a quarter midget for his son Virgil to race. Those were great times!

Russ retired at age 50 as a supervisor from Western Electric in August 1983. At 88 he was retired longer than his employed years there. Soon after retiring he put together a logging truck, and hauled short logs for local loggers for several years. He continued in retirement with many projects, as he really was a jack of all trades! As a young man he learned how to sew to make himself some shirts, crocheted, drew pictures, newspaper typesetting, learned all about his computer, tractors, backhoes, and could build or fix just about anything. Though he never learned to read music, he could play guitar, organ and accordion by ear. We have recordings of him playing and singing on his old reel to reel recorder. He loved the oldies, and country music, and had great dance moves even with the great-grandkids. He wore out several radios that he would leave on 24/7 in his workshop through the years.

He was preceded in death by his parents and brother Jacob F. Unger. Survived by his wife Carol of Auberry, sister Pat Dubois of Auberry, sister Betty Belloumini of Fresno, and brother Harold Unger of North Carolina. Son Virgil of Auberry, daughter Raelene Fleming (Gary) of Auberry, daughter Shirl of Fresno, and son Paul of Visalia. Grandkids Amber, Robert, Sarah, Brian, Dusty, Ashley, Mitchell, Derrick, Jocelyn, and Alexis. 16 great-grandkids and 2 great-great-grandkids. And many nieces and nephews.

He lived a great life, had a great laugh, and will be greatly missed by all! Russell Merle Unger was born in La Junta, Colorado on April 21, 1933. He passed away at his home in Auberry on February 4, 2022 at the age of 88.

Sadly, Russell's son Paul passed away in Visalia on February 16, 2022

A Graveside Service with Military Honors will be held at Fresno Memorial Gardens on Tuesday, February 22, 2022 at 2:00 p.m.

# Cemetery Details

## Fresno Memorial Gardens

175 S. Cornelia Avenue  
Fresno, CA 93706

# Previous Events

## Graveside Service

FEB **22**. 2:00 PM (PT)

Fresno Memorial Gardens  
175 S. Cornelia Avenue  
Fresno, CA 93706

# Tribute Wall



“ *Russell M. Unger*

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September 15, 2022 at 09:34 PM

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**Raelene Unger Fleming** - March 21, 2022 at 05:35 PM

“ For Pop

*How do you unpack the measure of a good man in such a small space on the internet? Grandpa, who I lovingly called “Pop,” was a spectrum of only the brightest colors—He burned hot when he was angry—face as red as a watermelon. And yet, I always felt a tame tenderness and truth to his anger—something I have savored throughout my life.*

*Pop was immensely mischievous. I remember the way he’d raise his bushy eyebrows above his wireframe glasses whenever he was about to embark on some silly venture—like the time he pulled a couple of orange slice candies from a glass jar on the kitchen counter while I sat at the breakfast table and he said, “These are my medicine.” We both laughed. Or there was the time he yanked the organ away from the wall in the family room and shot at a mouse with his pellet gun, or the many times he popped wheelies along the dirt driveway in his 15,000-pound backhoe. He made these silly moves for the giggles of his grandkids—for our amusement as much as his own.*

*Pop was also stern. We all had a healthy dose of fear of the man. He’d look sideways at me from across a restaurant table before I even had the chance to misbehave. More than the fear of avoiding a whoopin’, I desired his approval. I wanted his dark eyes to twinkle with delight for me—for my good behavior—for my silliness that mimicked his own. So, I’d sit up straighter in my chair at the table and sip my soda until our dinner came or until I was dismissed.*

*Our entire family relied on Pop. We could count on him to fix a broken dishwasher or replace the brake pads on our car—or the time he winched our three-wheeler out of the pond cousin Robert and my brother Brian Jr. accidentally launched off the pond’s dock. In so many ways, Pop was a man of restoration. I always felt whole after spending time with him. We didn’t even have to talk—I could just sit out in his shop and watch him weld something—sparks flying around his black mask as if he were a planet the stars shined*

*brighter for.*

*And man, Pop was hip. Even the way he stood was hip: head slightly forward, shoulder pulled back and relaxed, hips forward, his feet apart. Pop was cool. His mustache waxed and neatly curled. Flannel shirt tucked into his jeans. His suspenders tight enough to occasionally pop against his belly. And he was always smoothly slipping some funny story into our conversation—chuckling through it.*

*Of all my moments with Pop, the one I cherish most is spying on him singing one Sunday morning. Pop had a quartet of male gospel singers on the television, and he stood with his hand resting on the tall entertainment center with the sun coming in through the sliding glass door. He tapped his foot along to the beat. He sang loudly. He was in his church, singing to his god. And I loved him greater at this moment.*

*I will deeply miss you, Pop. We all will. You have added so much color to all our lives.*

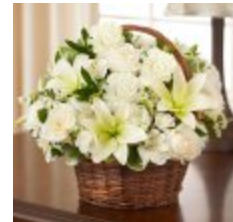
*Love always,  
Sarah*

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**Sarah Jones** - February 23, 2022 at 10:22 PM



“ *Peace, Prayers, & Blessings- All White was purchased for the family of Russell M. Unger.*



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February 19, 2022 at 01:20 AM

RF

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Raelene Unger Fleming - February 19, 2022 at 12:05 AM

RF

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Raelene Unger Fleming - February 19, 2022 at 12:02 AM



“ Classic Sympathy Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Russell M. Unger.



February 16, 2022 at 04:11 PM