



## Russell William Zimmer

February 27, 1926 - July 12, 2024

Torrington businessman and former State legislator, Russell William Zimmer, 98, died peacefully on Friday, July 12, 2024, at his home, surrounded by his family. Funeral services will be held on Saturday, July 27, 2024, 10 AM, at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Torrington, Wyoming, with the Reverend Scott Firminhac officiating. Burial will follow in the Valley View Cemetery, with full Military Honors. Colyer Funeral Home assisted the family with the arrangements and condolences may be sent to [www.colyerfuneralhome.com](http://www.colyerfuneralhome.com).

Russell was born February 27, 1926, in Minatare Nebraska, the son of Frank and Erma (Wynant) Zimmer.

The family moved to Torrington in 1936 after purchasing the Goshen Refining Company. He graduated from Torrington High School in 1943 and enlisted in the United States Army Air Force at the age of 17 as Private First Class. He learned to fly as an Aircrew Trainee, a skill he valued which gave him many enjoyable adventures later in life. He was honorably discharged following the end of World War II and returned home having been awarded the Good Conduct Ribbon, the WWII Victory Award and the American Defense Ribbon. He joined his parents in business as the manager of the newly built Z & W Mill, where they specialized in manufacturing livestock feed for the numerous dairy farms in the local area. It continues family operations to this day.

He met Ila Lorene Kaufman at a dance hall in Yoder in 1945. They were married in the Torrington

Methodist Church on July 21, 1946, and their lifelong commitment to each other lasted 77 years. Russell was a wonderful and devoted husband and father.

Russell envisioned the family business could provide more opportunities to farmers and ranchers in the North Platte Valley and with this foresight he grew the business by providing many of the products and services that continue to be offered to this day. One of his greatest business ventures was a partnership with Lester Maxfield, then owner of the Torrington Livestock Commission, purchasing and feeding cattle in their feed yard west of Torrington. Russell loved buying, feeding and selling cattle. He gained extensive knowledge of the industry throughout his career, and remained committed to the pursuit of raising beef and playing a part in helping to feed America.

In 1972, as Chairman of the Goshen County Republican Party, Russell was urged by his friend and then Governor Stanley Hathaway of Torrington to run for the office of Representative. He was elected and served two terms. In the House, Russell served on the Agriculture, Public Lands and Water Resources Committee, and the Travel, Recreation and Wildlife Committee. In 1974, he was helpful in passing the Wyoming Permanent Mineral Trust Fund, on the urging of Governor Hathaway. The legislation created Wyoming's sovereign wealth fund, funded by severance taxes from the sale of minerals, assuring future generations of Wyomingites the full benefit of the State's natural resources. He was then elected to the Wyoming State Senate in 1976 representing Goshen, Platte and Niobrara counties throughout his career. As Senator, Russell was a staunch supporter of agriculture, advocating for and proposing legislation to support the state's industry of which he was keenly involved with. Prior to the Legislature, as a young volunteer with the Torrington Volunteer Fire Department, he advocated for passage of the State's Volunteer Firemen's Pension Fund. At the time, the State only had a retirement fund for career firemen. He twice sponsored legislation that helped pave the way for the pension fund to expand, increasing recipient, spousal and child benefits

and lowering the retirement age. The Senator served on the Senate Agriculture Public Lands and Water Resources Committee as both member and Chairman; the Labor and Federal Relations Committee; the Education, Health and Welfare Committee; the Rules and Procedures Committee; and Management Council as Chairman. Russell was highly respected in the legislature's upper chamber serving as Vice President (1985-1986), Majority Floor Leader (1987-1988) and culminated his political career as President of the Senate from 1989-1990, retiring from public service in 1992. During his presidency, he helped the State celebrate its Centennial in 1990. Senator Zimmer was successful in passage of numerous bills that became law in Wyoming, helping to protect liberty and promote conservatism throughout the Cowboy State. Until his death, the Senator reminisced often of his time in Cheyenne and the countless memories he made as a legislator. Russell loved the Senate. He admired and held in high regard his many colleagues that he served with who became lifelong friends. Senator Zimmer was a true statesman and patriot, and represented the best of what Wyoming is, and he will long be missed.

In 1992, Russell retired, and sold the family business to his daughter Mary and late son-in-law Terry Viktorin. As a new venture, he set about learning woodturning by attending many symposiums, reading self-help magazines and became a master woodturner in his basement workshop where he created countless works of art. Russell and Ila traveled the world seeing Europe, Australia, Canada, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South America, Russia and China. One of their goals they achieved was to visit the 50 United State capitals and take pictures of the State buildings. Russell was also an avid gardener and grew award winning gladiolas for many summers. He was a fisherman and loved to commute with his boat to various reservoirs in the local area. He also loved to play cards, especially poker, pinnocle and pitch. During Russ and Ila's final years, the family met on Sunday afternoons to eat pie and play pitch.

Russell was a community supporter, serving on local boards and civic groups including precinct committeeman and Chairman of the Goshen County Republican Party, Goshen County Fair Board, Goshen County Planning Commission, chairman of the Goshen County Historical Society, Torrington Rotary Club, Wyoming Community Foundation and member of Our Savior Lutheran Church. Russell was a volunteer with the Torrington Fire Department for 40 years.

Russell is survived by his daughters Vickie (Michael Bond), Marcia Ward, and Mary Viktorin; his grandsons, Landon and Shane Viktorin, and Passion (Jaimie) and Zenith (Lisa) Ward; and his great-grandchildren Dannica and Jaxon Ward, and Noah and Jonah Ward.

He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife Ila, their daughter Joanie Lynn, sons-in-laws Terry Viktorin and Edwin Ward, his sister Avis Johnson, brother-in-law Howard Kaufman and sister-in-law Dolores Kaufman.

Memorials in Russell's name may be given to the Torrington Senior Friendship Center.

# Cemetery Details

## Valley View Cemetery

30th Avenue  
Torrington, WY 82240

# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

JUL 27. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (MT)

Our Savior Lutheran Church  
2973 East B  
Torrington, WY 82240  
(307) 532-5801

# Tribute Wall

DH

“ Russell was a good friend and mentor to me when I covered the legislature for several newspapers as a journalism student at UW. He was very kind.

Donna Harvey - October 15, 2024 at 02:47 AM



“ Gayle Hascall lit a candle in memory of Russell Zimmer



Gayle Hascall - August 04, 2024 at 01:14 AM

SH

“ Sending much love and thoughts to the family and friends that they all find comfort and peace during this time.



Sara Hajalie - July 29, 2024 at 08:37 PM

MK

“ Misty K. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Russell William Zimmer.

Misty K. - July 26, 2024 at 12:08 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Russell William Zimmer.*



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July 26, 2024 at 12:08 PM



“ *Lisa Lawrence ( kelly) lit a candle in memory of Russell Zimmer*



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**Lisa Lawrence ( kelly)** - July 25, 2024 at 04:29 PM



“ *Santillanes Family lit a candle in memory of Russell Zimmer*



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**Santillanes Family** - July 25, 2024 at 12:41 AM



“ *Sorry for your loss, he was such a great guy!! I hauled feed for him for many years and I miss our visits when I worked with him. Sending prayers to you Mary and your family. With respect- Marcos Martinez Jr. & Lupe Martinez*

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**Marcos Martinez Jr** - July 22, 2024 at 03:09 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Russell William Zimmer.*



July 19, 2024 at 07:14 PM



“ *Sorry for your Loss what a amazing man he was!*

**Jay & Bobbi Stuck** - July 19, 2024 at 01:09 PM



“ *Sorry to hear of Russell's passing, I started hauling feed for him in the mid 80's out of North Dakota. Truly a nice man whom I've called friend for many years. I'll miss the friendly visits from time to time. They don't make em like him anymore. RIP!*

**Kent Roehl** - July 18, 2024 at 07:47 PM



“ *Mike & Margo Wood planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Russell William Zimmer.*

**Mike & Margo Wood** - July 18, 2024 at 07:18 PM



“ *Mike & Margo Wood purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Russell William Zimmer.*



**Mike & Margo Wood** - July 18, 2024 at 07:18 PM



“ *Beloved Host Father (Rotary Youth Exchange 19760  
Lifelong Mentor and Close Friend*

*‘An absolute awesome Bloke in every sense’*

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**Mike Wood** - July 18, 2024 at 07:10 PM

SK

“ *Shelli K. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Russell William Zimmer.*

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**Shelli K.** - July 18, 2024 at 05:31 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Russell William Zimmer.*



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July 18, 2024 at 05:31 PM

SD

“ *Sue Davis lit a candle in memory of Russell William Zimmer*



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**Sue Davis** - July 18, 2024 at 01:38 PM