



Robert Noble Stutsman

January 15, 1941 - July 15, 2013

My Last Ride

The time has come for one last ride,

I'm heaven bound to be by God's side.

I loved my country, I loved my wife,

I loved my family, I loved my life.

But in my death please shed no tears,

I'm heading for glory, with God I'll be near.

Your sorrow and sadness, please put aside,

I've saddled my horse for one last ride.

ROBERT NOBLE STUTSMAN “BEARCLAWS”

Robert (Bob) Noble Stutsman “Bear Claws” passed away at age 72 on July 15 surrounded by his loving family. Bear was born on January 15, 1941 in Alton, Illinois. He was married twice; first to Dorothy Stutsman and then Sharon (Cowen) Stutsman. He is survived by Sharon, his wife of 45 years, his three sons (Matt Stutsman of Carson City, Dale Lamborn of Carson City and Chris Henkins of Phoenix, Arizona), one daughter (Laurie “Boogie” VonRekowski of Clear Lake California), 10 grandchildren (Sean, Branden, Travis, Bearett, Adam, Jared, Christa, Brian, Blake, and Alexandria “Baby”) and 3 great grandchildren (Landen , Aden and Tatum). He also has three awesome daughter-in-laws, Peggy Stutsman, Leah Lamborn, and Stephanie Henkins and one son-in-law, Alex VonRekowski.

Bear has been a well-known character in Carson City and the surrounding counties for the past four decades. Numerous newspaper and magazine articles have been written about him.

Bear was someone who stood out in a crowd. He was 6’ 6” tall and weighed 330 pounds, dressed in black pants, a wide-brimmed black hat and a black vest with a silver and gold badge on his chest. In his hands, a grapefruit looked as small as a baseball. Two .44-caliber Magnum pistols were cross-gripped, at his belt line. He had the fierce, drooping mustache of a mountain man and wore a necklace of 20 bear claws.

The story behind his nickname and necklace began at the age of 15. Working as a forester, he ventured into Arizona’s Sycamore Canyon to chop a felled tree into firewood. He walked around the point of a cliff and met a black bear. Both he and the bear were startled. The bear weighing 455 pounds was only a few feet away. When the bear lunged, he swung the axe at the animal’s head. Bear Claws killed him with what he called “one lucky blow.” Bear’s mother who

was half Cherokee made him the necklace. She told him, "When you kill an animal in battle, you take the spirit of the beast." Bear said, "I guess it is true since I grew to be as big as a bear."

Bear made a living at being big and tough since he was an overgrown kid in Arizona. He chopped trees and packed horses for the Forest Service, served in the military, owned a truck tractor repair business, worked in law enforcement and security jobs, was a bush guide and trapper in Alaska and boxed in 22 professional heavyweight prize fights. But above all, his passion was "cowboying" and being a lawman. He was raised on a ranch near Tombstone, Arizona, where he learned the cowboy way of life. At one point he captured and broke mustangs for a living. He continued to work with horses and wagons on the week-ends for much of his life. He even had some Texas long-horn cattle as pets.

Bear began a bailiff career in the Carson City Justice Court in the 1980s for the popular Judge Tom Davis, who gave him the custom-made badge he wore. He was first used as a "hired gun" to keep courtroom peace" after a series of Carson City prison riots. He became a permanent part of the courthouse in 1987 as a bailiff. In his first year as bailiff he confiscated approximately 600 weapons, knives and otherwise, that people tried to bring into the courthouse. That number dropped by about 95 percent during his tenure. His imposing image served him well in his mission to keep the peace in Carson City's courtrooms. Bear spoke quietly about "respect" and "the law" in a tone that left no doubt he believed in what he said. He had to control death-row inmates who had nothing to lose. In 1994, he made national headlines when, under the presiding Judge's order used duct tape to seal a rowdy prisoner's mouth.

Bear grew up on the legends of Tombstone gunslingers and lawmen like

Johnny Ringo, Wyatt Earp and Doc Holiday. Bear loved to read about Indian issues, western lore, wagon trains and stories about General George Armstrong Custer. He said, "The old West was a tougher, cleaner time in history. Things were new and honor counted for something." He got caught up in western history at a very early age and said "If I had my choice, I would be 100 years dead by now."

Tribute Wall



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall

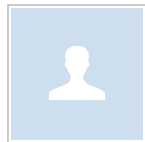


Neil Gray - December 04, 2025 at 02:36 AM



“ Robert Noble Stutsman

November 04, 2023 at 08:25 PM



“ Robert Noble Stutsman

November 01, 2023 at 12:58 PM



“ Dear Sharon,

We are so sorry to hear about Bob's passing. Our prayers are with you.

Love and blessings,

Mark & Carla

Mark & Carla Frady - August 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

RM

“ WE ARE SO SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS. BOB WAS A GOOD FRIEND.

RON & SANDY MASSMAN

RON MASSMAN - August 02, 2013 at 12:00 AM

HM

“ Bear it was an honor getting to know you and take care of you for the last few years. I will miss our morning talks, you where always so wise and had the best stories. you are truly missed but never forgotten.

Heather Miscovich - July 31, 2013 at 12:00 AM

CS

“ Love you and thinking about u, Sharon! I think Bear was the biggest man I've ever met, but maybe teddy bear should've been his name! Strong, but soft, in all the right ways! I know he always loved you to the middle of his soul, and I am grateful for the love you will always hold from him! You are an amazing woman, and you took such good care of him when he needed you! What a good wife you are! You are someone to look up to, and strive to be like! Always blessed to be your cousin! I love you!

Cousin Sheryl - July 31, 2013 at 12:00 AM

LF

“ I remember as a young girl all the stories about Bob and the Bear. The trips you and my dad took together...the trouble my dad would get into when he got home. I'm thankful for knowing you Bearclaw and thankful you were such a great friend to my dad.

Lynne Ludel Finch - July 31, 2013 at 12:00 AM

AW

“ I am so sorry to hear of the news of BearClaws passing..I worked with BearClaws when I was a Deputy Sheriff for 15 years with the Carson City Sheriff's Dept. He always had my back when I would bring prisoners to his court room and he taught me a lot about the law..He was one of the kindest and most giving men I have ever met..I looked up to him and admired him for all that he did for others..He will truly be missed but will never be forgotten..He was a true friend to everyone...My sympathy to his wife and family during this sad time..I know he'll be in heaven gunslinging again soon..All my sympathy, April Walkup

April Walkup - July 28, 2013 at 12:00 AM

SH

“ THANK TO EVERYONE FOR THEIR REMEMBRANCES AND STORIES ABOUT MY BEAR.

SHARON - July 27, 2013 at 12:00 AM

AF

“ i met "bear claw" years ago when a friend of mine was in a custody battle with her then ex for the children in the marriage. she had asked me to keep a eye on the boys and i did, i also got to "bear claw" and loved the story he told me about how he got his necklace. over the years, being a carson raised son, i would see him in the stores and restrants and he would always say hello. he remembered i was mechanic and the last time i saw him was out in stage coach at the old gas station out there and gave him advice on a car he was tinkering with. "bear claw" was a great man, a good man, and a man that will be missed. to the family i am so sorry for your loss andy fisher.

andy fisher - July 23, 2013 at 12:00 AM

SS

“ So sorry Sharon! He was an amazing man. I Love You!

Shellie Stewart - July 23, 2013 at 12:00 AM

EC

“ Bear was a man among men. In my minds eye, I see him as a gentle giant. His imposing stature was extremely intimidating but if you had the fortunate opportunity to talk with him, you'd realize he was a great and caring guy. The world has lost an amazing and unique individual and is less complete without him. My memory of him includes his fascination with searching for and finding Big Foot. If anyone could have done it, I believe he could certainly have done it.

To Sharon and family, I grieve for your/our loss.

Eric Cowen - July 23, 2013 at 12:00 AM

KM

“ Bear was always so nice to me when I delivered mail to the court house. I always made him smile and he always shared a great story with me. Much respect for him, God bless him Lord...

Kevin Morton - July 22, 2013 at 12:00 AM

DA

“ Your presence went as far back as I can remember. Seeing you brought comfort on more than one occasion but getting to actually sit and talk with you these past few years has given me smiles to last a lifetime. I think every time I see a person eating salad I will chuckle. :) I'm honored to know your family and to know that your great grandson, Landen, will know you as he has the greatest parents who love you and know the importance of carrying you in his heart. God speed. May your next journey be at adventures as your previous. Love and prayers to the family.

Dawn Allen - July 22, 2013 at 12:00 AM

SS

“ Grandpa BEAR

Our relationship started off a little rough. All i remember as a little kid was seeing you walk through a door and i would run the other way. As i got a little older i realized how kind, gentle, and caring you were. Thats when we kicked off our adventure together. From teaching me how to shoot, drive tractors, tying all the different knots you knew, midnight trips to fallon to drop off cattle for the auction, or the simple trips to the S&S gas station in dayton for a hotdogs and coke. Those days ment the world to me and i will never forget them. Those days flew by and before i knew it i was introducing you to my girlfriend ,Ashley and telling you we were having a baby. A few weeks after landen was born i got to see you hold him for the first time. That image will be in my heart forever. Im looking forward to teaching my son all the great things you have tought me over the years and sharing our stories with him.

I miss you evey day and will carry on your memory for life. Until we meet again.

I LOVE YOU GRANDPA BEAR

Sean Stutsman - July 22, 2013 at 12:00 AM

DB

“ I am so sorry to hear the passing of Bear Claw. That man was such a nice and gentle person and no one will ever forget him. My Uncle (Greg Biggin) and father (Ted Biggin) worked with Bear Claw for many years and ever time we would see him, my brother and I would just stare at his necklace. May God Bless your family and Sharon, we are so very sorry for your loss.

Diane Biggin-Jaramillo - July 22, 2013 at 12:00 AM

CH

“ Robert Noble Stutsman

Chris Henkins - July 22, 2013 at 12:00 AM

DL

“ I am so glad that we got to spend those few hours together after you made your decision. The things you said meant the world to me. I will take care of everything you asked...thanks for all the things you taught me, I love you Pop....Godspeed Bear!

Dale Lamborn - July 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

BH

“ Had a wonderful time getting to know you. You where a wondering person I no where you are they are blessed to have you! You will be miss

brooke halverson - July 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

MS

“ I will always love you and miss you. You were always larger than life and you will forever live in our hearts and we will carry your stories with us forever. My biggest comfort is that you called the last shot and I am proud of you for hanging in there as long as you did. I love you Dad.

Matt Stutsman - July 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

SN

“ Bearclaw, I'm honored to have called you friend and may your knots never slip. Rest in peace my friend.

Steve Nelson - July 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

LL

“ Although we did not know Bear Claw as well as I would have liked both my husband and I thoroughly enjoyed the few talks we had with him. I hoped to see him out working with his horses every time I went by his home on my way to our son's house.

Linda Lippincott - July 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

TL

“ I love you grandpa Bear Claws. You will be remembered and missed.

Travis Lamborn - July 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

JB

“ Sharon and family,
Sorry to hear about Bob, but he is with all his friends of his younger years. I will always remember the time he shot me in the butt with a a blank wade. He will be missed and always remembered.
Joyce and family

Joyce E. { Petersen} Bartel - July 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

JM

“ Sharon, I am so sorry for your loss. I know all the things you are supposed to say at a time like this but they never seem realistic. I pray you find the same unwavering strength to take care of yourself that you have had this last year taking care of Bear. Condolences to you and your family.

Janet Marrone - July 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

AR

“ Dear Uncle Bear Claws:

Me and my little brother, Cruz, will miss you. You could speak Spanish and taught me a few words I never knew. You always took the time to talk to me. You were always so nice and fun to be around. You told my papa I am a good boy. I will always try to live up to that and will never forget you.

I love you.

Aaron (8 Yrs old) & Cruz(9 months old) Ramirez

Aaron Ramirez - July 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

DC

“ *The Bob I knew lived his life the only way he knew how, sometimes harsh, sometimes hard, sometime funny, but always finish with pride.*

He was almost colorblind when it came to people. In all of his travels and "careers" he learned not to judge a person by color or background, "give'em a chance"..... at least once.

For Robert, right was right and wrong was wrong. Very few gray areas.

If Bob had died a 100 years ago our generation would missed out on a special person who made life intresting for those around him.

sharon, you have had a wild and crazy ride for 45 short years with a man a man who loved you and understood that you became his compass in this crazy world. The ride isn't over, your just on different trail.

When you have lived your life with honor and faith, you ahve have nothing to fear. So lived Robert "BEAR CLAWS".....

Our thoughts are with you all.

Dave and Sharon Churchey

dave and sharon churchey - July 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

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Dave and Sharon Churcheykk

dave and sharo churchey - July 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

PS

“ *Bob, I could not have asked for a kinder, honest, loving father in law. I enjoyed and loved the 25 years you treated me like a daughter. You are missed. I love you!!!!*

Peggy Stutsman - July 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

JL

“ I am a Retired Deputy from CCSO, I worked with Bob for many years.

This one particular evening everything I did seemed to go wrong, Bob saw me in the station and asked if I would like a rider for awhile.

I said of course, knowing Bob and what he portrayed I was happy for the help.

The night did not get any better, but Bob seemed to make things better with just his presence.

After the shift was over, some of the Deputies were at the Nugget having a few drinks in the lounge, and in walked Bob. All 6-6 off him, his 10 gallon hat and bearclaw necklace.

He sat down, we all had a few drinks, told some stories, Bob got tired, stood up, pulled out his six shooters and said "lets shoot this place up and get out of here."

Everybody in the bar hid and yelled and asked the bartender to call the cops, the bartender replied, what for they are the cops, don't worry they won't hurt you.

Bob had a presence that he took everywhere he went. The man looked rugged and mean, but if you had the luck of getting to know Bob, you knew he would always be there to cover and help you in a bad situation, and that he wouldn't hurt a flea.

The world has lost a Big Man, and a good friend to lots of Law Enforcement Officers in Carson City.

Bob, Bear as I called him, was a true friend, and will be missed! Bob you will be missed, by everybody whose lives you have touched.

Go with Gods speed, my friend!

John Lubich

Retired Deputy CCSO

John Lubich - July 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

RG

“ The 10 years we lived down the street from Bear Claws and Sharon were filled with extraordinary real Western events. The time Bear Claws brought three rank, wild horses from Arizona and came by at 11:00 at night to ask if Rick could help him set up the coral at Quilicies Ranch. Bear Claws related to those horses better than with most people. After some time, they were completely under control, only with hand signs!

Our daughter told her friend that she knew someone who had to duck to come through the doorway. Not believing her, a picture was the proof.

He was so straight forward, honest and full of stories of his life. At first we thought he couldn't have done the things he said, but one day he showed up with a trunk full of the his adventures, like Ring Magazine where Sonny Listen refused to fight him.

He loved to eat and his wagon train recipes are still in our recipe box.

He was one of a kind.

Once in a while he would work for us in our mobile home repair business. He put in a wood stove for Ernie Ulch, marking the spot the stove pipe would go through the ceiling with a pencil, pulling out his 44 magnum gun and shooting the spot. He said that way he knew it would be straight.

Only Bear Claws..

Great man, unique and he will be missed, but never forgotten.

Rick and Linda Groves - July 21, 2013 at 12:00 AM

EL

“ Its been around 35-40 yrs. since the last time I saw BoB "BEARCLAW" and I just want to say he made a lifelong impact on me because of the solid ground he stood on and the Truth he spoke. How much of an impact can one person make on another? Well here I am today feeling the need to put in a word or two from my saddend heart and I am currently 47 years old. THATS HOW MUCH !!!!!

Thankyou " Mr. BoB BEARCLAW" I remember you like it was just yesterday you "growled" !, See you again someday !
Eric Ludelj

Eric Ludel - July 20, 2013 at 12:00 AM

JC

“ You were always larger than life. You were colorful, interesting and full of knowledge about things most people knew nothing about. You were articulate in your explanations of events and stories of time gone by. There shall never be another you. You were special and were always your own person. I loved that about you.

Jackie

Jackie Cheney - July 19, 2013 at 12:00 AM

ML

“ Was an honor to be your friend in this life and looking forward to an eternal fiendship in the future. But will still miss ya

Mike Ludel - July 18, 2013 at 12:00 AM