



Bernard Matt Russ

March 31, 1936 - July 9, 2025

Bernard (Bernie) M. Russ, 89, died July 9, 2025. Born March 31, 1936, in Hibbing, MN, and raised in nearby Kitzville. Preceded by parents John and Ann, and brother John Jr. Survived by Loretta, his wife of 67 years, and children; Kimberly (David) Butler, Wendy Robson, David (Jenny) Russ, and Michael Russ.

A 1955 Hibbing High School graduate, Bernie attended Hibbing Junior College before transferring to Utah State University on a football scholarship. As a running back for U.S.U, Bernie's teammates included the legendary Merlin Olsen. In 1959, he earned a B.B.A in Business Economics from U.S.U.

From 1959 to 1989, Bernie worked for The Pillsbury Company. His diligence, enthusiasm, and ability to "always be selling" allowed him to rise swiftly up the ranks - assuming bigger territories and leadership responsibilities over the years. Bernie championed women and minorities throughout his career. Upon retirement, a Pillsbury personnel manager sent him this message: "...you were always an advocate for equity and fair treatment of the sales force and a natural partner in ensuring your managers applied these principles in all of their dealings."

As a husband, Bernie looked for ways to make life fun. Surprising Loretta with a decorated Christmas tree in their small, Utah apartment, a 1964 Galaxie 500

Convertible on Valentine's Day, a Hawaiian vacation as a Christmas gift, and a two-seater outhouse at the first of two cabins he built by hand on Whiteface Lake.

As a father, Bernie stressed the value of a college education and a strong work ethic, frequently urging all four children to "get your ducks in a row." He also modeled how to tell a good story and use humor to diffuse tense moments.

After Pillsbury, Bernie and Loretta moved to Hilton Head Island, SC, where they played golf so often he achieved two hole-in-ones months apart. Bernie loved fishing trips of all kinds, especially to Alaska and Canada, where he once reeled in 33-inch walleye pike. Each summer, Bernie and Loretta returned to their home on Lake Esquagama in Gilbert, MN, where Bernie fished, socialized, and golfed at the Esquagama Country Club. Not too shabby for a kid from Kitzville.

In October 2024, Bernie entered The Willows memory unit at Vernon Terrace in Edina, MN. The family is grateful to The Willows staff for their kind, attentive care and support.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to: Ebenezer (Employee Appreciation Fund) <https://ebenezercares.salsalabs.org/giving/index.html>, and Grace Hospice, Minneapolis <https://www.gracecaring.org/support-us/>

A funeral will be held Saturday, October 4, 2025, at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Gilbert, MN, at 12:30 pm. Reception to follow at the church.

Tribute Wall

LF

“ So very Sorry to hear of your loss, Loretta ...what a testament to a marriage and life well lived ...You are surrounded by so many friends and your family so the memory of Bernie will be a present sweet memory for you and themPrayers for all of you ...I share your grief and understand your sorrow! Sympathies sweet friend !!
🌹🙏 Lucy McDonald

Lucy McDonald, a friend - October 11, 2025 at 01:09 PM

MS

“ Bernie was one of my Russ cousins. So sorry we missed your last year, Bernie!!
Sending love and prayers to Loretta, Kim, David, Wendy, Michael and their families.

Mary K Shah - July 19, 2025 at 11:48 PM