



Hazel Lee [Owsley] Wood was born in rural Hickory County Missouri on May 3, 1926. Life was difficult in the great depression, but even at a young age Hazel was not content with handouts. She lived with, and was adopted by an aunt and uncle, Homer and Grace Owsley, where she milked cows before and after school. Hazel cooked, hauled water, learned to sew and generally became the “little sister” in a family of 4 older brothers. One of her brothers had been widowed and left with an infant to raise. Hazel became the only mother the little girl knew. She attended one room schools, playing girls basketball and softball, then was able to graduate from Preston High School.

While in the army during WWII, future husband Leonard Wood once complained to his buddy, Bud Owsley, that there weren’t any nice girls to write home to. Bud responded, “write to my sister—she is a nice girl.” Thus began an army post office mail romance. Hazel explains she wrote every day, even if she had nothing to say. She says they planned their marriage without having ever met face to face. Upon Leonard’s discharge from the army, they were married on May 5, 1946, in Preston.

Hazel and Leonard made their home on the Wood Family ranch in Parshall CO, getting stuck in the mud before reaching the ranch, which was at the end of the county road. Many a new bride might have headed for the train in Parshall never to return, but not Hazel. Hazel and Leonard made ends meet by milking 30 head of Jersey cows morning and night, by hand, separating off the cream for shipment to Denver by rail, then washing that old cream separator, and starting all over again.

Electricity and refrigeration eventually ended the market for cream. Leonard and Hazel then transitioned to raising Hereford beef cattle. A deal with the Denver Water Board that provided for the construction of the Williams Fork Reservoir allowed them to expand their herd. However, this required them to pick up and move their entire operation, house, barns, and all up the valley.

Beef cattle might sound easier than dairy, but beef cattle needed to be fed daily. Hazel and Leonard would hitch the team, drive to the stackyard, and using pitchforks, load a ton of loose hay on the sled, then pitch it off to those hungry cows. They built miles of barb wire fence, brought cold newborn calves into the basement, and on occasion into the bathtub and bucket fed orphans. Spring and summer meant irrigating the hay meadows, and in the fall cutting and stacking hay for the winter. Ever wonder why Hazel wasn’t a very large person? —she worked harder than any two people for many years.

Besides being Leonard’s partner in the ranch work, Hazel grew a large garden. She was a great cook, known for her rolls and cinnamon rolls and the tasty pot roasts she made using her mother-in-law’s 5-quart cast iron Dutch oven. Her ability to stretch a meal to accommodate another unplanned guest or two was famous. She was an election judge when needed and a 4-H sewing leader as well as a taxi driver as the kids got old enough to participate in after school activities but were not yet old enough to drive.

Hazel and Leonard were blessed with 3 children. Leonard passed away in 1989, and Hazel moved to Kremmling, living in the Culbreath Apartments, Rayner Apartments, and Silver Spruce senior housing.

Hazel made many friends at these facilities. She was a resident in extended care at the Kremmling Hospital until her death on December 7, 2021.

Hazel loved baseball, and especially Colorado Rockies Baseball. She was their #1 Fan thru the ups and downs—she knew all the players by name. Her main complaint was any good players the team acquired were soon traded to another team with the result the team stayed about the same.

She is survived by her children; Nina, Kelley, and Carl, 2 daughters in law, Carol and Deb, 7 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren, 2 great-great grandchildren, numerous nieces and nephews and many, many friends.

A celebration of her life will take place in the spring, most likely about the time of her birthday.