



Joel Raymond Brown

May 12, 1935 - May 23, 2026

Joel Raymond Brown was born on May 12, 1935, in a small area below Bugtussle, Alabama; he passed away on May 23, 2026, at the Folsom Center in Cullman, AL.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Brock and Maude Brown; his son, Joe Brown; and his daughter, Sheila Brown. He was also preceded in death by his brothers, Walter Allen Brown, Uell Brown, and Buell Brown; and his sisters, Vonda Adkins, Mattie Campbell, Jimmie Yates, and Shelby Davis.

He is survived by his son, Dennis Brown (Sandy); his daughter, Nicole Brown Hetrick (Greg); his grandchildren, Joel Brown, Landon Brown (Audrey), Scott Brown, Jackson Carroll (MaKayla), and Maggie Hope Hetrick; his great-granddaughter, Corinne Brown; along with many nieces and nephews whom he loved dearly.

Joel grew up in the Bugtussle and Cold Springs communities. He attended Cold Springs School, where he played basketball as a young man and helped work the family farm.

From an early age, Joel was known for courage, skill, determination, and a gift for motors. He entered the trucking business when he was young and became exceptionally talented behind the wheel. He competed in 18-wheeler rodeos

and won — able to maneuver a semi truck with the same ease most people handled a car. He also hauled dynamite as what they called a “suicide jockey,” a job that required nerve, precision, and absolute confidence.

Later, he entered the moving business with his brother, Buell, but automobiles were always one of his greatest passions. In the early 1970s, Joel began working in the automobile business, including time with Drinkard Chevrolet. He later partnered with Red Haynes to help start South Park Auto Sales and eventually founded Joel Brown Auto Sales. He became a longtime partner at Classic Olds and Cadillac, where many people throughout the community came to know and respect him.

Joel was adventurous by nature. In the early 1970s, he earned his pilot’s license and flew for a time, adding “pilot” to the long list of things he managed to accomplish in his life. He also loved motorcycles and took many trips across the country with friends over the years.

If it had wheels and a motor, Joel could drive it — and usually did, including a bulldozer.

He was also a Mason and became a member through the Trimble Masonic Lodge, though in later years he no longer attended regularly.

For all his business success and adventurous spirit, part of Joel’s heart always belonged to the land. He loved farming, raising cattle, horses, and animals of every kind. He had a natural connection with animals — the kind of man they trusted instinctively. Family often joked he was like a pied piper because the animals, even the ducks, would follow him wherever he went.

In his later years, his best friend and constant companion was his beloved German Shepherd, Luke. The bond they shared reflected the gentle side of

Joel that those closest to him knew well — loyal, steady, and deeply connected to the animals he loved. Another special companion was his German Shepherd Bella — “Bella Ruth,” as the family lovingly called her.

Joel was also known for always wanting to get from Point A to Point B as quickly as possible. Family stories about him became legendary — like the time he drove right past Mount Rushmore National Memorial, or when he drove the family all the way to Key West and never even got out of the car. There were also stories involving Mexico and getting a gun back across the border with Galea’s help — stories that became part of the larger-than-life legend that was Joel Brown. That was Joel: always moving, always chasing the next destination.

Above all, Joel was a presence — larger than life in so many ways. He was hardworking, strong-willed, adventurous, unforgettable, and smart as a whip. He carried grit, independence, humor, and complexity all at once. He lived fully, wore many hats throughout his years, and left behind stories that his family will tell for generations.

The family held a graveside service for Joel on Wednesday, May 27, at Cullman City Cemetery, Cullman, AL.

Active Pallbearers:

Dennis Brown, Landon Brown, Scott Brown, Jackson Carroll, Kyle Carroll, and Greg Hetrick.

Honorary Pallbearers:

Ben Allen and Dwight Pope.

In lieu of flowers, Joel requested that donations be made to Cullman Caring for Kids