



Bruce A. Smith

April 5, 1955 - March 31, 2019

Bruce Allen Smith, age 63 of Fallon, MT passed peacefully after a brief battle with a very rare, aggressive cancer on Sunday, March 31st, 2019 in Glendive, MT, with his wife Karen by his side.

Bruce was born on April 5th, 1955 in Willison, ND on a day that had thunder, lightning and snow! He was the third of four boys, born to Edward and Juliet (Ellevold) Smith. He was raised on the farm south of Dagmar, MT. The Smith place raised small grains, hay, hogs, cattle, sheep, chickens and the family always raised a large garden, all of which served him well later in life as an Extension Agent. He was raised in the Lutheran faith. He was a proud Medicine Lake Honker and his 6'11" frame served him in track (as a high jumper & shot putter) and in basketball, besides it being a great conversation starter. He was MVP of the state Class B basketball tournament in 1972 and was one of the Scholastic Coach's Top 100 Basketball players in the US two years running.

Bruce met his future wife, Karen Skedsvold, at a dance in Culbertson. They were married in 1974. They both attended MSU-Bozeman. Bruce earned a full basketball scholarship and graduated with honors (a BS in Ag Production-Animal Science) in 1977. Bruce played basketball in Bourg-en-Bresse, France for 1978-79 season. He and the team's travels took them through the southern half of France.

Upon returning to the US, Bruce also returned to MSU and graduated with honors with a BS in Ag Business in 1979. He returned to the family farm and built up his own sheep flock. Elizabeth was born in 1980. Drought and grasshoppers made those last years tough, so Bruce entered graduate school at Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo and earned his MBA in 1987. JoAnna was born in 1985 while in California. Bruce commuted every day to school. He worked construction and built fences to make ends meet. Upon graduating he went to work for Pillsbury/Green Giant processing vegetables in Watsonville, CA. The family went through the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989; it was time to move.

They moved to Illinois; and at the age of 35, Bruce became the youngest Plant Manager for Van den Bergh Foods, the producer of 'I Can't Believe It's Not Butter.' In 1993 they moved to Idaho where Bruce was the Manufacturing Manager of the Universal Frozen Foods French fry plant. He went through the second corporate buy-out of his career and knew it was time to get back to Montana. The family spent the next couple of years in Twin Bridges while Bruce commuted back and forth to Whitehall as the Madison/Jefferson County Extension Agent. When the Dawson County Extension position opened in 1996, Bruce applied, in part to be closer to both he and Karen's families.

Turned out being an Extension Agent in a single-agent county was an almost perfect job for Bruce. He could go from agriculture to horticulture to community development to youth programs to family consumer sciences all in one day, if need be.

As an avid local foods advocate, Bruce helped start the Farm-to-Table Project, the Glendive Saturday Farmers' Market, the Glendive Community Garden, the Glendive Food Development Center, the Farm-to Table Store and the Farm-to-Table Cooperative.

Bruce served on several local, state and regional boards (he traveled throughout Montana and the region). He was extremely interested in helping people and communities become more self-sustaining.

Bruce reached his goal of making 1,500 bird houses for 4-H camp, all of them made from scrap lumber and old pallets he cut himself. He so enjoyed seeing the bird houses he helped campers build show up at the many county fairs in the region and on fence posts around the area. Bruce spent over 35 years involved in 4-H as a member, leader and County Agent.

Bruce was an extrovert. He enjoyed a chance to converse with the many people he met traveling and working throughout Montana, the US and France. He spent endless hours researching in genealogy; he loved metal detecting, reading and collecting books, and building things. From an early age he showed a penchant for collecting all things. Everything had a use to him, even if no one else could see it. Seldom, if ever, did he throw something away, he believed everything could be recycled.

He received several awards and honors that he was especially proud of and treasured.

He loved to visit, laugh, teach, share, learn/read, collect, go to his daughters' games and now to his grandchildren's games. He was ever so proud of his two daughters and his grandchildren.

He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Karen; daughters Elizabeth Smith (Tanner) of Terry, MT; JoAnna Smith of Fort Benton, MT; his mother Juliet of Plentywood, MT; brothers, Gary (Marilyn), Doug, and Rod (Mary) all of Dagmar, MT; grandchildren Abe and Bella Smith of Terry, MT. As well as numerous nieces, nephews, and great-nieces and nephews. He was

preceded in death by his father, 'Big Ed' and a niece Johanna.

Cremation has taken place, private interment at a later date.

A funeral service will be held on Wednesday, April 10th, 2019 at 11:30 am MST at Zion Lutheran Church in Glendive, MT with Pastor Avis Anderson officiating. A reception will follow services at the EPEC in Glendive. Silha Funeral Home of Glendive has been entrusted with the arrangements.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to any of the following or to a charity of your choice:

Dawson County 4-H, 207 W. Bell St, Glendive, MT 59330-1616

Glendive Community Cancer Fund, PO Box 1144, Glendive, MT 59330

Montana Wool Growers Memorial Fund, PO Box 1693, Helena, MT 59624

Remembrances and condolences may be shared with the family at: www.silhafuneralhomes.com.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

APR **10**. 11:30 AM (MT)

Zion Lutheran Church
401 Riverview Avenue
Glendive, MT 59330

Tribute Wall



“ *Bruce A. Smith*

December 07, 2022 at 04:10 PM



“ *The first time I met Bruce was at a community development event at which he was speaking. I saw the name on the agenda and thought nothing of it until he walked in the room - I thought to myself - he's got to be a Smith from Dagmar! After his session, I introduced myself and he admitted that I "looked like and Andring". Our work crossed paths a few time the past year, he was always a treat to listen to. His work was admired and impactful. I'm terribly sorry for the loss of Bruce. God bless you all.*
Jan (Andring) Stankiewicz

Jan Stankiewicz - April 12, 2019 at 02:51 PM



“ *Bruce was a senior in high school when I came to teach in Medicine Lake. I like to tell this story often. It was our first or second day of classes and I was sitting at my desk when he walked up and asked, "May I go to the bathroom?" I cranked my neck up so I could see his face and said, "Yes you may." I was actually thinking, "You can do just about anything you want to!" Loved that boy. So polite and kind and respectful. He did come to our house shortly after we moved to Whitehall in 1996. He had already accepted the job in Glendive and was getting ready to move. I'm so glad we had that wonderful visit with him. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of you during this difficult time.*
Rick and Irene Strauss

Irene Strauss - April 10, 2019 at 11:35 AM

LS

“ *Lindsay Sadorf lit a candle in memory of Bruce A. Smith*



Lindsay Sadorf - April 09, 2019 at 05:42 PM

EL

“ *Bruce had a character larger than his stature...which says a lot in his case. Deepest sympathies to the Smith family, friends, and the countless people he interacted with daily.*

E. LeMay - April 08, 2019 at 03:47 PM

LF

“ *Lance and Lisa Kalfell and family purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Bruce A. Smith.*



Lance and Lisa Kalfell and family - April 08, 2019 at 02:41 PM

DC

“ I am sad to hear of Bruce's passing. We had a great time in Bourg during the basketball season and also in Montana in the summer of 1978 with Kiki. Bruce was a great teammate but especially a very good friend. I have a tender thought for Karen, her daughters and all her family. Rest in peace Bruce, I will never forget you.
Your friend Daniel



Daniel Courtine - April 08, 2019 at 01:12 PM



“ Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Bruce A. Smith.



April 07, 2019 at 10:47 PM

BH

“ I got to know Bruce at MSU in 1974 when we both started Ag classes. The next four years of school were the best memories of the good times that I have had. We kept in touch through the years, even though it was at a distance. Thanks Bruce for being such a good friend, you are still have a special spot in our life and you will not be forgotten. Warmest hugs to you Karen for holding his hand and reminding him of all the good times. Yer ole buddy Bret Holt.

bret holt - April 07, 2019 at 01:31 PM

DA

“ My heart goes out to Karen and their family. Hold on tight to all the many memories you created together. Hugs and prayers. Darla Larsen Card

Darla - April 07, 2019 at 11:33 AM

DR

“ My sincerest sympathy. Dorothy Reil Alexander ND

Dorothy Reil - April 06, 2019 at 02:28 PM

CS

“ I met Bruce in the 90's when he first came to Glendive to be the County Extension agent, I also lived in Glendive at that time. I used to do the audits on the County and Bruce often lent me office space to do this. Bruce had visions back then to do good things with what he knew, and I don't think anything was impossible for him. He was probably the biggest guy I'd been around, which was not hard to notice, but he was more impressive in his relationships with people. He cared and listened and was just a friendly fellow. I offer my prayers and condolences to Bruce's family, he will certainly be missed by all.

Craig A. Shepherd - April 06, 2019 at 11:06 AM



“ Bruce was one of the first people I met in Montana, and our conversation was a positive part of my decision to accept my job at MSU. What a visionary... and a do-er too. I will miss Bruce very much.

Alison Harmon - April 05, 2019 at 03:09 PM

DH

“ Bruce was an amazing guy, I am really going to miss working with him, especially at Camp and our county fair. He was a great Extension neighbor and really welcomed and helped me get started on the right path in my Extension career. We are sure going to miss you, rest in peace Big Bruce.

Danielle Harper

Wibaux County Extension Agent

Danielle Harper - April 05, 2019 at 12:46 PM

JL

“ We will miss our cousin Brucie, Jim’s nickname for Bruce. He loved going up to the office and visit. I enjoyed our conversations about family and genealogy. He loved talking about his family and send letters out every Christmas and shared what each was doing. He will be deeply missed by all his family. Our prayers, love to Karen, JoAnna, Elizebeth, and his grandchildren; his 3 brothers, Gary, Doug, Rodney and their families. To his lovely mother Juliet. You are in Jesus arms now Bruce and we will see you again. He has done so much for our community and we are all Blessed to have know this gentle soul.

We love you and miss you. Jim and Rose Lauckner

Jim and Rose Lauckner - April 05, 2019 at 12:32 PM

RL

“ Rose Lauckner lit a candle in memory of Bruce A. Smith



Rose Lauckner - April 05, 2019 at 12:12 PM

CB

“ I am so sorry for your loss. Bruce was a great guy and it was fun to work with him in the Extension Service. May our Lord give you comfort. Chole Crosby Butler, Sidney, MT

Chole Butler - April 05, 2019 at 09:22 AM

NH

“ Karen and family,
I am so sorry for your loss, my thought and prayers are with you all. You had many wonderful years with a wonderful man in Bruce. Cherish those memories and you will never be alone. My god hold you and your family in his hands.
Norine Roller Haugland

Norine Roller Haugland - April 05, 2019 at 08:59 AM

BR

“ Such a good gentle big man with an even bigger heart, he will be missed by so many and so many will miss what he so willingly had to give.

Bob Rogers - April 05, 2019 at 01:06 AM

CA

“ Karen, so sorry to hear of your loss, hugs and prayers of comfort to you and your family 💕🙏

Ron and Cheryl Arthur

cheryl Arthur - April 04, 2019 at 11:59 PM

CA

“ *My thoughts and prayers are with Bruce's family. RIP Bruce.*

Carrie Tvedt



Carrie - April 04, 2019 at 11:34 PM

MD

“ *Mearl DeTienne lit a candle in memory of Bruce A. Smith*



Mearl DeTienne - April 04, 2019 at 11:31 PM

LN

“ *So sorry for all the family. Bruce was an outstanding, energetic guy with a great sense of humor; we enjoyed him. God's peace.*
Linda and Roger Nelson

Linda Nelson - April 04, 2019 at 11:19 PM



“ *Alvy Beck lit a candle in memory of Bruce A. Smith*



Alvy Beck - April 04, 2019 at 10:36 PM

DS

“ *Denise Stoddart lit a candle in memory of
Bruce A. Smith*



Denise Stoddart - April 04, 2019 at 09:51 PM

VR

“ *We are holding you all close in prayer for comfort beyond all
understanding.
Lon and Vicki Reukauf*

Vicki Reukauf - April 04, 2019 at 08:25 PM

WF

“ *Doug and I send our sympathies to Bruce's
wife and family.
Doug and Penina Weaver*



weaver family - April 04, 2019 at 06:34 PM

TT

“ Bruce was a wonderful man. He was a true leader and friend. The SW ND Economic Developers Group worked with Bruce on not only gathering leaders together from southeastern Montana and southwestern North Dakota for informal idea sharing, but also help create the Gateway to Opportunity Forum that was held opposite years in Glendive and Dickinson. We always enjoyed his presence, stories, and ideas.

We will especially remember his fun idea of creating the country of "MonDak", eastern MT, and western ND. He had it all laid out. Since the more populated ends of our states seems to ignore us, we would use our natural resources (that they of needed of course) and use it for our own economy. Because of the vastness, we would vote electronically. We would develop our own government, we of course wanted Bruce to be our President! ;-) Yep, he had it all ready to go, and we would vote for him!

Our thoughts are with the family, rest peacefully Bruce, we're voting for you.

Terri Thiel - Dickinson Convention & Visitors Bureau

On behalf of the SW ND Economic Developers

Terri Thiel - April 04, 2019 at 05:10 PM

DW

“ Debbie Weyer lit a candle in memory of Bruce A. Smith



Debbie Weyer - April 04, 2019 at 04:46 PM

LH

“ *Lori Hajek lit a candle in memory of Bruce A. Smith*



Lori Hajek - April 04, 2019 at 10:06 AM

JS

“ *James Slupczynski lit a candle in memory of Bruce A. Smith*



James Slupczynski - April 03, 2019 at 05:11 PM

HF

“ *We will miss BIG Bruce, the jolly giant. From sharing neighborhood days, 4-H, Volmer Church, college bonds, extension interaction, accomplishments of daughters, and being great friends, our memories are filled with a plethora of wonderful times, hearty laughter, and oodles of giggles.*

Sincerest condolences go to Karen (his forever sparkle), Juliet (his lovely mother), Elizabeth & Jo (his forever joy), his three brothers and their families, and the numerous people he positively impacted. Bruce exerted great effort to make the world better. Great man, great servant, great friend.

Sincerely,
Avice & Ivan

Hoff Family - April 03, 2019 at 01:58 PM



“ *Strength & Solace Spray was purchased for the family of Bruce A. Smith.*



April 03, 2019 at 11:23 AM



“ *I was so glad when Bruce contacted me 4 years ago and let me know that we cousins. To be exact, our great grandparents were first cousins, but since I have no first cousins anywhere, it meant a lot to get to know him. I only regret the time we lost. I am very sorry for your loss. Mary Ann (Burke) Holderman*

Mary Ann Holderman - April 02, 2019 at 08:46 PM



“ *Pretty Please was purchased for the family of Bruce A. Smith.*



April 02, 2019 at 06:23 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Bruce A. Smith.*



April 02, 2019 at 05:35 PM

SW

“ Karen , girls, and families You have so been in my thoughts and prayers lately. I am so very sorry for your loss Continued thoughts and prayers for your healing

Susie Waller Wanner - April 02, 2019 at 01:15 PM

DS

“ Karen and girls, I am truly sorry to hear about your loss. May God give you the extra strength, courage and understanding needed in the difficult days ahead. Saving a hug for our next meeting. Darlene

Darlene L Strobel - April 02, 2019 at 12:31 PM

TA

“ I was so sorry to hear of Bruce's passing. He was a wonderful extension agent to have in a neighboring county. He did some work on my genealogy and swore we were cousins a few generations back - I hope that is true. Tara Andrews

Tara Andrews - April 02, 2019 at 12:20 PM

DS

“ Our sincere condolences to the family. Ever since he was born I called him “Little Cousin Brucie”! I continued calling him that his entire life. There wasn't anything about Bruce that was “Little”, he had the biggest heart and the kindest spirit of anyone I've ever known! There's a hole in my heart because he is gone! Bruce was a gentle giant of a man and he will forever be missed! God Bless you and your family “ Little Cousin Brucie” and May you Rest In Peace! Love you “Big Guy”!

Dennis

Dennis Smith - April 02, 2019 at 12:02 PM

LG

Karen and family, you are in our thoughts and prayers. We were so sorry to hear of Bruce's passing. He was such a force and will truly be missed. Bruce will always be my County Agent. I will miss our chats and his wisdom. It was an honor to call him friend.

Laura Germann - April 02, 2019 at 07:13 PM

JS

“ Once while traveling with Bruce to Bozeman, he asked me how many 60 year old giants I knew. I wasn't able to respond but the message was clear: I won't have a long life like my dad. Bruce lived his life with intensity. He will be remembered for that. Jim Squires

Jim Squires - April 02, 2019 at 12:00 PM

KN

“ Prayers to the family, Bruce was a great guy, taken too soon and will be missed by many

Ken & Bonnie Nelson - April 02, 2019 at 11:48 AM

CD

“ Carole J. Diede lit a candle in memory of Bruce A. Smith



Carole J. Diede - April 02, 2019 at 10:50 AM

LP

“ So very sorry to hear about Bruce he was a very decent man always had a warm smile on his face, and a kind word, rest in peace to you our giant of humanity. mike and linda peel

linda peel - April 02, 2019 at 09:47 AM

TD

“ So sorry for your loss. He was a great guy!
RIP Bruce!



Tammy Dey - April 02, 2019 at 08:00 AM

KN

“ Bruce will be sadly missed by everyone that knew him. He was a big man with a giant heart! I have nothing but good memories of him, and will always cherish them. Karen and family - my sincere condolences. Ken and Bonnie Nelson

Ken Nelson - April 01, 2019 at 06:19 PM



Sure will miss your reports and updates on the radio...you were a star in Glendive....now you will be a shining star!! RIP Bruce.

Justin Bilbrey - April 02, 2019 at 11:32 PM

JR

Words cannot express how sorry my family is to realize that Bruce is no longer with us on earth. He will forever be in our memories as a part of a special family who are our good friends and neighbors. We wish we could do something to help.

Joy Rasmussen - April 03, 2019 at 09:14 PM

KB

So sorry to hear of your loss. Love and prayers to you and your family.

karen Baxter - April 05, 2019 at 11:41 AM

LN

Prayers to the Bruce Smith family! Not only was Bruce my idol growing up as a young boy playing basketball but also got a chance to work with Bruce on some entrepreneurship projects in North Dakota. He was a man of character, wit, and a willing helper for anyone in need! Montana and North Dakota lost a great leader in the Ag and Business world in things he accomplished and/or assisted with during his years in Extension! He will be missed by all and will always be remembered as a kind, big "Teddy Bear" advocate of anything of character! Rest is Peace my friend!
Loren Nelson

Loren Nelson - April 05, 2019 at 04:47 PM

PB

Bruce is a main mentor and influence in my 50 Year career:

Dear Ones, Thank You! Jan 25, 2025

As someone receiving this letter you and/or your family have served as major difference makers in my life! Although born in New York right after the end of WWII and hence a baby-boomer, as it turned out my true life began in Montana and continued to blossom in Idaho! All my "rehab" began with my being hired onto the floors of Lighthouse – a multi-addiction treatment program that included an amazing staff development program.

And also an amazing Christmas caroling staff party with the Deer Lodge Schools staff that introduced me to Corky and then to her special family.

After about three years there at Lighthouse, a visiting training professor recruited me to MSU Bozeman to be her teaching assistant and actually teach psychology intro classes and co-lead practicum for master's students.

From there the Eastern Montana Mental Health Center hired me to be a Montana state psychologist and over the next 12 years sent me to the very best training programs in America & Canada for CEUs and program development. Amazing!

During this time I was invited to join the Montana State Governor's Advisory Council on Children and Youth, which he then turned into Montanans for Children Youth and Families – and later I was elected to be its President.

Getting older and more highly trained, I ended up specializing in treating abuse victims and perpetrators and had to start a private practice for both physical and sexual abuse. Those were tough years but also led me into more marriage and parenting CEUs from the best in the USA and to the point I became a Trainer of Trainers for all of them.

During all this time my Faith in God and turning to Jesus was also growing strong and I began using the teaching skills I was gaining to lead church programs for individuals, couples and families.

This led to my receiving the courses and training to become an Ordained Minister and bi-vocational in both Pastoring and providing a family Counseling service. When that small and elderly congregation could no longer afford to pay my salary I continued to serve them another year or so until a Montana winter road commute accident required a move.

Soon thereafter a family emergency precipitated a further move all the way to Idaho! Now these last 10 years in my 50 year career have also been service: at first commuting 840 miles one way from home to work in Glendive where I still had a contract to lead treatment programs in the eastern regional prison (at first I was home once a month, then twice, and then weekly – which was when I was able to start working as a counselor for our church counseling program and for A New Path

(now Trivium) in their domestic violence offender rehab program – until one annual review when I was in ID fulltime and I asked if they would prefer me as a treatment provider or an Evaluator, and they asked me to do evaluations.

This led to my still leading church programs, such as those mentioned above plus being one of the founders of one of our area's Celebrate Recovery Program, and using all of my court and mental health training to do over 800 four to seven hour full court evaluations. .

Retiring this year has led me to still serve the church and begin the long process of sorting through 50 years of accumulated training materials – someone recently said that may require all of 2025!

As for you, one of my elder prayer leaders once stood up at the end of prayer, took a step forward and pointed directly at me and said, “Jesus love you and so do !!” That is my message to you too! Pete Bruno

Peter J Bruno - January 25, 2025 at 08:20 PM