



## Fen Wilkinson

March 21, 1941 - August 4, 2025

Fenwell "Fen" Lee Wilkinson, 84, of Glendive, Montana, passed away on Monday, August 4, 2025, at the Glendive Medical Center with family by his side. A Gathering of Family and Friends with a Time of Sharing will be held at 6 P.M., Friday, August 8, 2025, at Silha Funeral Home in Glendive. A Celebration of Fen's Life will be held at 11 A.M., Saturday, August 9, 2025, at the Dawson Community College gymnasium. Interment will follow at the Dawson County Cemetery. Family welcomes friends to attend a luncheon at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Glendive following burial. Silha Funeral Home of Glendive has been entrusted with arrangements.

Born in Ogden, Utah, on March 21, 1941, Fen's story began in tragedy: his father, Karl Joseph Wilkinson, a forest ranger and ski patrolman, was killed in an avalanche just three months before Fen was born. But that early loss only deepened the themes that would play out across his life—resilience, service, purpose. Fen's mother, Audrey Winifred (Cady) Wilkinson, moved with him and his older brother, Karl, II, to her hometown of Glendive. When Fen was three years old, his mother remarried. His step-father E.P. "Chris" Christiansen worked for the Northern Pacific Railroad. After sixth grade, Fen and his family, with his newest brother, Loren, moved on to Missoula and then to Livingston due to his step-father's job. However, Fen would return to Glendive after college to leave a mark as unmistakable as chalk on a blackboard.

Fen graduated from Park County High School in Livingston with the Class of 1959. He went on to earn a Bachelor of Science degree from Montana State University in 1964 with teaching majors in both mathematics and science. He later returned to MSU to complete a Master's in Applied Science of Mathematics in 1972. Throughout his career, he continued professional development through extension courses in computer programming, curriculum design, and educational leadership from both Montana State University and the University of Montana.

Fen married twice during his life. With his first wife Glenda Anderson, he welcomed a son and daughter, Guy and Shelley. Later, Fen and Glenda divorced. In 1969, he married Margaret "Marge" Songer, and the happy couple added three more sons, Greg, Rob, and Mike, to their family. Marge's steady nature balanced his adventurous spirit and their partnership deepened into a quiet, enduring bond—steady and strong through fifty-six years together.

Fen Wilkinson believed in education—not just as a profession, but as a calling. Over the span of 28 years in the classroom and decades on the court, he taught math with the same strategy and heart he used to coach basketball and tennis: fundamentals first, delivered with energy, humor, and relentless encouragement. Students who came in dreading math often left loving it. His "boom-boom" teaching method, his rhymes and songs about algebra, and his refusal to let students fail themselves became local legend. One former student—years out of school and working as an electrical engineer—once jumped out of his car just to recite the quadratic formula back to him in four seconds flat. Though Fen held advanced degrees and soaked up education at every turn, he never acted like the smartest person in the room. Instead, he made other people feel smart, capable, and seen. He taught with patience and high expectations, but he also listened—with a coach's ear, a parent's intuition, and a friend's steadiness. All things considered, his 1989 Montana Teacher of the Year designation was more than well-deserved.

If Fen's teaching years can be called prestigious, his coaching career, meanwhile, must be titled epic. He led Dawson County High School to two girls' basketball State A Championships and six second-place finishes. He also coached boys' basketball and tennis, building programs known for discipline and teamwork with the quiet confidence of a man who didn't need the spotlight of the more than a dozen State A Championships earned under his tutelage. He was twice named Montana Coach of the Year and was inducted into the Montana Coaches Hall of Fame in 1991. But his favorite victories weren't always on the scoreboard—they were in the progress of an underdog team, the pride of a player who finally found her stride, the loyalty forged in early-morning practices and late-night bus rides.

And he was loyal. Fiercely, sometimes comically so. In a speech delivered later in life, Fen told a story about a loyal assistant coach who took his joke too far—after Fen pretended to be furious with a farmer and shot the man's mule (after privately being asked to), but the assistant coach shot two cows for good measure and in support of Fen. "That's loyalty," Fen deadpanned. Then he reminded the crowd to keep it in perspective.

His perspective, in fact, was what made him remarkable. He believed in hard work, but not at the expense of imagination. He challenged students and players to see themselves doing something truly exceptional—then gave them the tools and encouragement to do it. He balanced principle with humor, ambition with humility. As he told students: "I've been 18. You've never been 71." And he meant it with love, never condescension.

Fen's role in the Glendive community extended far beyond the classroom. A member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, he taught Sunday School for years and served in various church leadership roles. He and his

wife Marge opened their home to students in crisis, including two children left orphaned by a tragedy in the community. “Can we come live with you?” one of the children asked. Fen didn’t hesitate. They stayed for the remainder of the school year—and as long as they needed.

After retiring from education, Fen took on a new challenge as Regional Claims Manager for a crop insurance company, proving, again, that reinvention wasn’t reserved for the young. But teaching always remained close to his heart. Even into his later years, he gave speeches to graduating classes, offering advice with his signature blend of warmth, wisdom, and dry humor.

As commencement speaker, he instructed the DCHS graduates of 2012 to carry three things into life: Attitude, Imagination, and Loyalty. That’s how he lived. That’s how he’ll be remembered. He was a teacher, a coach, a mentor, a friend, a father, a Papa, and a husband. He showed up when it mattered and stayed longer than he had to. He expected greatness—and often got it, not because he demanded it, but because he believed in people before they believed in themselves.

Fen Wilkinson didn’t just teach math. He taught how to move through the world with grace, grit, and just enough mischief to keep things interesting. And for the thousands who learned from him—on paper, on the court, or just in passing—he made the equation of a life well-lived look simple.

But of course, it never was. He just made it feel that way.

Fen was preceded in death by his parents.

He is survived by his wife, Marge; sons, Guy (Lori), Greg (Stacy), Rob (Jessica), Mike (Jen); daughter, Shelley; 16 grandchildren; 6 great-grandchildren; his brothers, Karl, II, and Loren (Paulette); and numerous

nieces, nephews, and innumerable friends, classmates, and coworkers.

Remembrances and condolences may be shared with the family at [www.SilhaFuneralHomes.com](http://www.SilhaFuneralHomes.com).

# Cemetery Details

## Dawson County Cemetery

Corner of North Sargent Ave. and East Allard  
Street  
Glendive, MT 59330

# Previous Events

## Gathering of Family and Friends with a Time of Sharing

AUG 8. 6:00 PM (MT)

Silha Funeral Home  
221 North Meade Avenue  
Glendive, MT 59330

## Funeral Service

AUG 9. 11:00 AM (MT)

Dawson Community College  
300 College Drive  
Glendive, MT 59330  
<https://www.dawson.edu/>

## Luncheon

AUG 9. 12:30 PM (MT)

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints  
1900 North Anderson Avenue  
Glendive, MT 59330



# Tribute Wall

JH

“ *My prayers and thoughts are with Fen's family. It is hard to lose such a great soul and I hope for peace that passes understand to descend on his family. I was grateful to be able to teach and coach at the same time as Fen at DCHS. He will be missed.*

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**Jack Hanson** - September 17, 2025 at 07:59 AM

GK

“ *Gerhard Kron lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson*



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**Gerhard Kron** - August 21, 2025 at 11:45 PM

NS

“ *Nichole Geer Sikveland lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson*



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**Nichole Geer Sikveland** - August 18, 2025 at 03:57 PM

MC

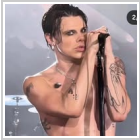
“ *I lived across the street from Fen in High School 76' to 80'. When i was a Freshman, before i got my drivers lic. he would drive me to school 2 to 3 days a week and we would stop at gas station just down the road and he would buy me a Twinkie. He would always throw in some life advice along the way. I really did appreciate his kindness. Mike Costle*

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**MIKE COSTLE** - August 14, 2025 at 10:33 PM

KK

“ Coach was a great man... I'm not sure how many times he said Cheese and Crackers Kassner but I will never forget that and it puts a smile on my face over 40 years later. Prayers to the family and thanks for sharing the Celebration of Life on YouTube to those of us who couldn't make it there in person but were there with family in spirit

Kevin Kassner - August 11, 2025 at 08:49 PM



“ A million memories of a great man!  
Mr. Wilkinson, you'll never be forgotten!



Kymberley Allen - August 11, 2025 at 11:14 AM

BD

“ I was fortunate to have Mr. Wilk (Silk) as a coach and teacher for several years. He made math and basketball fun, and every kid he had knew that Mr. Wilkinson truly cared about them.  
I'm a teacher and coach and I know much of my style came from Fen as a model of how to treat people. I still reference some of the things he taught me to my students. Thanks Coach for all the great memories!

Brian Dougherty - August 11, 2025 at 10:00 AM

DR

“ *David Reynolds lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson*



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**David Reynolds** - August 10, 2025 at 11:38 AM

SF

“ *Marge and Family,*

*We are so sorry to hear of Fen's passing. Fen was a lifelong friend as you are as well, Marge, and words cannot express our sadness for you and your entire family. We want you to know that our love, thoughts, and prayers are with you all during this very difficult time.*  
*Sandra and Paul Fasting*

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**Sandra and Paul Fasting** - August 09, 2025 at 05:07 PM

LL

“ *Our Condolences to Fen's family for the loss of their Husband, Father and Papa. The neighborhood/community says goodbye to a Hero. Fen accomplished a lot throughout his life but he was never boastful about it. We observed Fen as a constant, humble force; always ready to greet you with sincere and honest eye contact, a warm smile and a kind word. Our lives were made richer through Fen's examples, we honor that and will miss seeing him walking around the neighborhood and playing with his Grandchildren. With our deepest sympathies.*  
*LaMont and Marie-Christine.*

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**LaMont & Marie-Christine Lamphier** - August 09, 2025 at 12:28 PM

NK

“ I was one of his students. He was always encouraging and many times he said if you need help solving that problem in algebra make sure to come in and see me. Sure, enough I passed algebra not with a C but an amazing B. Thank you Mr. Wilkinson for your success rate in reaching out to your students!



Nancy Korb - August 09, 2025 at 10:35 AM

DB

“ My condolences to Fen Wilkinsons family and friends during this difficult time. He was one of my teachers in high school. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.



Denise Borotrager - August 09, 2025 at 12:47 AM

GS

“ I would like to offer condolences to Marge, and all of the family, Fen and I taught math next door to each other for several years at DCHS.  
We were both MSU grads and we shared our love for mathematics. Fen was a dedicated educator and he always wanted what was best for the students.  
Fen will be greatly missed.  
George Skerritt

George Skerritt - August 08, 2025 at 03:22 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Fen Wilkinson.*



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August 08, 2025 at 02:04 PM



“ *Gene & Julie Jensen - Melba, ID purchased the Pretty Please for the family of Fen Wilkinson.*



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**Gene & Julie Jensen - Melba, ID** - August 08, 2025 at 12:34 PM



“ *Gene & Julie Jensen - Melba, ID planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Fen Wilkinson.*

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**Gene & Julie Jensen - Melba, ID** - August 08, 2025 at 12:34 PM



“ *My sympathies and prayers to the Wilkinson family - Your husband, father, Grandpa was one of a kind - he was a great teacher and coach and one of the nicest people I've ever met. Mr. Wilkinson will always be a Legend in Glendive!!*

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**Mandy (Boese) Kutzler** - August 08, 2025 at 12:11 PM

PR

“ PJ and Brittany Rackov purchased the Fiery Lily and Rose for the family of Fen Wilkinson.



PJ and Brittany Rackov - August 07, 2025 at 10:24 PM



“ Days of Sunshine Bouquet was purchased for the family of Fen Wilkinson.



August 07, 2025 at 09:57 PM

GK

“ gerhard Kron lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson



gerhard Kron - August 07, 2025 at 09:02 PM

LJ

“ Love, Bette Rae Jones purchased the Summer's Light Bouquet for the family of Fen Wilkinson.



Love, Bette Rae Jones - August 07, 2025 at 07:13 PM

LJ

“ Love, Bette Rae Jones planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Fen Wilkinson.

Love, Bette Rae Jones - August 07, 2025 at 07:13 PM

JS

“ Anyone who attended DCS remembers Fen as he walked the halls of the gym , or in his classroom... letting us run across the street to chicken Andy's, or the Dairy Queen.. most of the time it was his idea.. he made sure we all knew what we were doing, but also had a good time learning a skill, whether in the classroom or the court.. Glendive we'll miss that little smile you always had! Rest easy you deserve it!! Strength, and memories to his family, and all who knew him!



Jacky Boje Saur - August 07, 2025 at 05:23 PM

JS

“ Jim and Donna Stanfill sent a virtual gift in memory of Fen Wilkinson



Jim and Donna Stanfill - August 07, 2025 at 02:25 PM

JH

“ Janet and Ralph Hieb lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson



Janet and Ralph Hieb - August 07, 2025 at 02:18 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Fen Wilkinson.*



August 07, 2025 at 02:15 PM



“ *The Kraft Family purchased the Blue Caribbean Bouquet for the family of Fen Wilkinson.*



**The Kraft Family** - August 07, 2025 at 01:49 PM



“ *Marge and family,  
So sorry for your loss of Fen. Our thoughts  
and prayers are with your family. Kathy & Mel  
Sampson*



**Mel Sampson** - August 07, 2025 at 01:35 PM



“ *Teresa Woodworth-Madsen lit a candle in  
memory of Fen Wilkinson*



**Teresa Woodworth-Madsen** - August 07, 2025 at 11:05 AM

KS

“ Marge and family - Coach was one of a kind and I feel lucky to have been one of his many students in the classroom and on the courts. I will miss running into him for a quick visit and seeing him walking in the neighborhood. Keeping you all in my thoughts and prayers.

Kristie Stanhope - August 07, 2025 at 09:23 AM

RB

“ May you all feel the comfort and blessings of God's love during this time. Randy & Linda Baldwin



Randy & Linda Baldwin - August 07, 2025 at 12:57 AM

GC

“ Few lives have the impact this man did!!! Anyone who's life he touched can count themselves blessed!! RIP Mr. Wilkinson!!!

Geri Cullinan - August 07, 2025 at 12:15 AM

L(

“ Marge and family,  
I am so sorry about your father and your husband, Fen was a wonderful man. He always had a smile on his face. He was always so kind to me. He was a very spiritual person. So sorry for your loss. Love you guys.

Lindsay Richhart (Clayton) - August 06, 2025 at 11:54 PM

BT

“ *Wilkinson Family My sympathy for your loss! Alto I never hadMr Wilkinson for a teacher he was well respected in DCHS!!!*

Becky Tipton - August 06, 2025 at 07:15 PM

RM

“ *Mr. Wilkinson was one of the best teachers that I have ever had, he made learning fun and memorable. With his little songs and "famous quotes" from previous students. He will be missed.*

Ron Mischel - August 06, 2025 at 06:42 PM

RM

“ *Ron Mischel lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson*



Ron Mischel - August 06, 2025 at 06:39 PM

JA

“ *That Smile; that Coach; that Man; what a Great One! You will be missed and always remembered*

Joyce & Bill Ayre - August 06, 2025 at 05:54 PM

PC

“ *Pioneer Music Company purchased the Basket of Memories for the family of Fen Wilkinson.*



Pioneer Music Company - August 06, 2025 at 04:31 PM

BB

“ *Bob Boepple lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson*



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**Bob Boepple** - August 06, 2025 at 03:26 PM

TF

“ *The Kubas Family purchased the Days of Sunshine Bouquet for the family of Fen Wilkinson.*



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**The Kubas Family** - August 06, 2025 at 01:39 PM

TD

“ *The Bishopric Dudes purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Fen Wilkinson.*



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**The Bishopric Dudes** - August 06, 2025 at 12:07 PM

HF

“ *Harvey & Kathleen Obritsch & Family purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of Fen Wilkinson.*



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**Harvey & Kathleen Obritsch & Family** - August 06, 2025 at 11:26 AM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Fen Wilkinson.*



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August 06, 2025 at 10:39 AM



“ *THE WALLNERS Cindi and Family purchased the Forever Our Angel Bouquet for the family of Fen Wilkinson.*



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**THE WALLNERS Cindi and Family** - August 06, 2025 at 10:12 AM



“ *Myrna Kintz lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson*



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**Myrna Kintz** - August 06, 2025 at 10:08 AM



“ *Fen was the best! As a young girl wanting to learn about basketball, Fen invited me to his practices and I was a sponge. He was a great teacher. After moving away from Glendive, our teams battled hard against each other. He was always so kind and respected. He impacted me and so many young men and women. He will be missed but fondly remembered. Prayers to the family. RIP Coach.*

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**Rhonda Bowers** - August 06, 2025 at 09:59 AM

JM

“ *jay miller lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson*



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**jay miller** - August 06, 2025 at 09:36 AM

MB

“ *Marge and the entire Wilkinson family so sorry to hear of Fens passing. I don't have to tell you what a special person he was . My condolences. They must have needed a tennis coach in heaven.*

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**Mike Boone** - August 06, 2025 at 08:13 AM

GK

“ *Grace Koffler lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson*



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**Grace Koffler** - August 06, 2025 at 06:52 AM

MZ

“ *Prayers to Fen's family and loved ones. Truly a one-of-a-kind human being with a unique and kind and fun approach to teaching and coaching that impacted thousands of Glendive students. I feel blessed that I got to be one of them.*

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**Mike Zimmer** - August 06, 2025 at 12:13 AM

TN

“ *Tanya & John Bonicelli, Mabel & Nala purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Fen Wilkinson.*



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**Tanya & John Bonicelli, Mabel & Nala** - August 05, 2025 at 11:55 PM

CK

“ *Cory & Sheila Knutson lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson*



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**Cory & Sheila Knutson** - August 05, 2025 at 11:43 PM

DA

“ *My thoughts are with you. Sandra Anderson*

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**Doug and Sandy Anderson** - August 05, 2025 at 09:44 PM

RB

“ *Rick and Karen Berg lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson*



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**Rick and Karen Berg** - August 05, 2025 at 09:40 PM

TK

“ 1 of my favorite Teachers in my Life..May his Light always shine Bright, and his Spirit Live on Forever..May Fen Rest Easy..May God Bless!



Terry and Deb Knapp - August 05, 2025 at 07:06 PM

MW

“ Mark and Sheryl Walsh lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson



Mark and Sheryl Walsh - August 05, 2025 at 06:54 PM

CP

“ OMG, I am so sorry to read this. Cherish all the fond times together. Condolences to all of you!

Cherise Patterson - August 05, 2025 at 06:14 PM

EL

“ Eula Langton lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson



Eula Langton - August 05, 2025 at 06:12 PM

AG

“ *Arlene Gieser lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson*



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**Arlene Gieser** - August 05, 2025 at 04:14 PM

BK

“ *Bonita Keel lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson*



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**Bonita Keel** - August 05, 2025 at 02:29 PM

DS

“ *Denise Stoddart lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson*



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**Denise Stoddart** - August 05, 2025 at 01:24 PM

DD

“ *Dan and Donna Dobson lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson*



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**Dan and Donna Dobson** - August 05, 2025 at 12:45 PM

HB

“ Dear Marge and family, Fen was a great friend. I've been in grief counseling since losing Jeanie to cancer on April 07. My prayers are with you. Harry

Harry Bickle - August 05, 2025 at 12:37 PM

RB

“ Rita Berube lit a candle in memory of Fen Wilkinson



Rita Berube - August 05, 2025 at 12:34 PM

JM

“ Our thoughts and prayers to the Wilkinson family. May all the wonderful memories you have keep him alive in your hearts and help you through these difficult days. Mark and Joanne Makelky



Joanne Makelky - August 05, 2025 at 11:58 AM