



Fred Rilla

August 6, 1943 - February 20, 2007

Fred LeRoy Rilla, age 63, of Glendive, died Friday, February 16, 2007 at the Glendive Medical Center. A Life Tribute Service will be held at 2:00 P.M., Tuesday, February 20, 2007 in the Chapel of the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home in Glendive with Celebrant Sandy Silha and Rev. James Hageman officiating. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive is entrusted with the arrangements. Fred was born August 6, 1943 in Glendive, the son of Fred and Martha (Undem) Rilla. He was raised and educated in Glendive schools, graduating from Dawson County High School in Glendive with the class of 1961. As a young man Fred enjoyed boating and waterskiing. Fred had a great love of all types of sports, whether it was as a participant, a referee or in later years as a spectator. He enjoyed dancing and watching football and Nascar racing on television. He especially loved having his grandchildren come to visit and going fishing with them. Fred married Patricia Van Vorst on October 10, 1974 in Glendive, they had made their home in Glendive, since that time. Fred had worked for the Montana State Highway Department in Glendive until going to work for his brother-in-law, Lavern Pettersen as a truck driver for the Chevron bulk distributing plant. He later worked for Cross Petroleum as a truck driver until an injury forced his retirement. Following his injury, Fred enrolled at Dawson Community College in Glendive, where he studied for two years until earning his degree. Following his graduation from college he returned to the Montana State Highway Department where he was employed as a Design Drafter for the past eleven years. Fred had been very

active in the Glendive Elks Lodge #1324, having served as an officer and as the Exalted Ruler in 1983. Fred was preceded in death by his parents, one sister and one son from a previous marriage. Survivors include his wife Patricia of Glendive, a step-son, Kevin Swanson of Mulberry, Arkansas, two step-daughters, Sheri Shoopman and her husband Dick and Beth Schultz and her husband Guy all of Glendive, two sisters, JoAnn Pettersen and her husband Lavern and Lois Hansen all of Glendive, five grandchildren, Brock Norby, Bryce Norby, Delaney Schultz, Tori Shoopman and J.D. Shoopman, two children from a previous marriage and several nieces, nephews and cousins. Celebrant service: "Life is oh-too-short to miss the chance to celebrate each other; to share our tales of success and applaud the lessons learned from making mistakes; to clap and cheer; to laugh and dance; to smile and say, I'm glad you're in my life." By Jane Latus Emmert Those words were written by a woman grieving the loss of a loved one. Today, as we grieve the loss of Fred LeRoy Rilla, we take this opportunity to celebrate, honor, and pay tribute to his life. We will share our stories of Fred; we will recognize his successes and applaud what we have learned from him. We will use this time to shed our tears, to remember, to smile, to appreciate the fact that we are glad Fred was in our lives. The candles Fred's grandchildren have lit represent a love of Fred that burns in the hearts of his family; the flames of these candles are a reminder of the warmth and color that Fred put into their lives. "To live in hearts that love is not to die." Fred was a man who lived simply, was proud of his family, and was content with what he had. A few of the words his family uses to describe Fred include: caring, honest, loyal, frugal, dependable, stubborn, intelligent and as his grandson, J.D. said, at least two or three times, direct. How do you remember Fred? Do you see a small man with a big heart? Do you remember the ever-present cap on Fred's head? Can you still see Fred with his wife Pat, cutting up the dance floor? Or Fred stepping out of his propane truck as he delivered fuel? Did you ever see Fred angry? His children certainly remember him shaking his finger at them a time or two. Perhaps your memories are of his active days at the Elks Lodge. Maybe you

simply recall visiting with Fred over a cold one. Did you play ball with Fred or did he ref or ump a game you or one of your kids were in? Fred's family has put together a video tribute to share with you. The background music, "Walela", was chosen by the family, suggested by Fred's step-son, Kevin. "Walela" is the Cherokee version of "Amazing Grace". Please watch, listen and remember. Video tribute Celebrant: Fred Rilla was born, raised, and educated here in Glendive. Fred raised a family here, worked here, and played here, and last week Fred died here in Glendive, where his roots are. Fred was the youngest of four children and his sister, JoAnn, who was eight when Fred was born, endured the benefit of a little brother tagging along with her on many occasions. It fell to JoAnn to help keep a watchful eye on Fred. JoAnn's recollections of those young years, was of many trips to the neighbor's to eat pancakes, Fred's favorite. Fred was a child who would wander away a lot, and so to keep better track of him, Fred would sometimes be attached to the clothesline. Throughout his younger years and into adulthood, Fred loved to participate in sports, anything with a ball. Fred became very active with the rec department programs, playing and officiating. His job as an ump or ref was done decisively and fairly. He was an avid spectator of the local sports, and thoroughly enjoyed watching his grandson play ball. Especially baseball. Fred was so pleased when his grandson, Bryce, wanted to pitch, and he eagerly taught Bryce what he knew about pitching. Fred wouldn't show Bryce how to throw a curve ball before he was physically ready, but when Bryce came of age to throw a curve, Fred would get excited when that curve ball would come at a batter. Sometimes Fred was a bit too eager, and Bryce would have to remind Fred that some of the pitches he was trying to teach, well, they just weren't legal. But everyone in the family agrees that Fred's favorite activity and what he was best at was waterskiing. Fred's brother-in-law, Lavern, was the boat driver, pulling Fred and other skiers around all day. Fred was always up on the water immediately and went all day, skiing, pushing the envelope trying tricks, teaching others to ski, or just picking up other skiers' ropes. Many

enjoyable week-ends were spent on the water. JoAnn and Lavern also employed Fred as a truck driver for their Chevron bulk distributing plant. Fred had worked for the Montana Hiway Department on a crew that sometimes was out of town all week. Tiring of this, Fred jumped at a chance to drive locally for Lavern. Lavern sincerely felt that Fred was the best worker he ever had. Fred was well liked by the rural people he delivered to. If Lavern had to deliver after Fred had made deliveries, customers would complain about Lavern's scrawled receipts; they were used to Fred's neat, precise, and readable handwriting. Fred was forced to give up his bulk delivery job, when he suffered a fall on the job and shattered a foot. Fred re-trained for a new occupation at Dawson Community College, completing a two year program. His step-daughter Sheri, recalls him complaining about the homework, but as was Fred's way, he did his best, finishing the program, and graduating with good grades. After graduation, Fred returned to the Montana Hiway Department as a design drafter. Sheri's observation of this time in Fred's life was that he proved it is never too late to learn and do new things. Fred's co-workers at all his jobs, admired his work ethic. Fred rarely missed a day of work. He was a co-worker you could depend on to get the job done and done right. Fred took pride in what he did. But most important to Fred was family. He cared for them, supported them, instilled values by word and example, protected them, loved them. Pat recalls the first time she met Fred. She and a friend were at the Montana Inn, seated at a table with a group of people. Pat noticed a fellow obviously making his way to their table. She thought he was pretty good looking and wondered what his plan was. When Fred reached the table he made it clear he wanted to dance, with her friend. But Fred returned later in the evening and asked her to dance. After telling this story, Pat chuckled and commented that she was his "second choice". Pat was only second choice with Fred that one time. When Fred's step-daughter, Beth, looks back on Fred marrying her mother, Pat, and taking on Pat's three small children, she has great respect for the love he must have had for Pat. Beth has even greater respect for the lesson of responsibility he taught her. Fred

had three children he was supporting from a previous marriage. With Pat's three children, Fred was actually supporting six children on a modest income, not always an easy task. And not always something understood by growing children. When Beth was in high school, she worked three jobs and was determined to buy a car. Beth found just the one she wanted and thought she could afford, a cute little red one. She had it all worked out with the bank on making the payments but needed Fred to co-sign the loan. Beth gave Fred all the details and Fred planned to go check out the car at the dealers. When Beth came home from school the next day, there, parked in front of the house, was Beth's new car that Fred had bought for her. No, it was not the cute little red one, but instead it was a car the mechanic at the dealership had for sale at a great price. It was an oxidized, chalky, pink, pink car with plaid upholstery and many other features Beth hated. It seemed Fred had been through teens, vehicles and wrecks with Beth's older brother and sister and was a bit disillusioned by the experience. At the time of Fred's college days, Beth was married and living in Sidney. Fred had always driven company vehicles, and now being unemployed, he needed a vehicle to get back and forth to college. Beth surprised him with a "gem" she bought from a Danish worker in Sidney. Europeans loved big American cars, and she got a great deal on a huge, pink Cadillac, which she presented to Fred with a big grin and the word, "payback!" Even though the car wouldn't run, Fred kept it around for awhile, enjoying the thought behind it. One of the things Fred and Pat enjoyed and were very involved in over the years was the Glendive Elks Lodge. Besides the many hours of socializing and dancing they did at the Elks, Fred was active in the offices and rituals of the Elks Lodge, going through the chairs and serving as the Exalted Ruler in 1983. Pat says one thing Fred did was memorize all the rituals; he never read them during the formal proceedings or ceremonies. He would practice them in the mirror at home until he had everything perfect. That is the way he thought it should be done and that was the way he did it. When Fred was Exalted Ruler, Fred and Pat went to the Nat'l convention, which that year was in Hawaii. It was a wonderful trip for them both. Generally, when

Fred and Pat traveled, they drove. Well, Pat or one of the girls drove because they couldn't stand how slow Fred drove and they wouldn't let him drive. Fred's grandson, Brock, remembers a trip to Arkansas to visit Kevin. What sticks in Brock's mind about that trip and a few others is Fred riding in the backseat, worried sick that Pat was going to get them lost. They heard it all the way to and all the way from Arkansas. On a trip to Rapid City, South Dakota, with JoAnn and Lavern, Pat was again driving, with Fred and Lavern playing cards in the back seat. When they arrived in Rapid City and Fred looked up from his cards, they were driving by a motel next to a Mexican restaurant called "La Cucaracha". Fred asked Pat if this was where they were staying. "Maybe" said Pat. Fred knew they were lost if they were staying at a motel called "la cockaroacha"! That was one of the things that made the trip fun! According to Sheri and Beth, if Fred had a hobby it was Pat. When Fred was not working, he liked to sit and relax. Not Pat. She always had a project going to keep busy with. Pat didn't wash walls, she painted them. Fred would grumble that their house didn't need insulation because the walls were so thick with paint. When Pat would tell Fred about a new project or a redo she was planning, he would first say no, then later he would tell her how much she could spend, and then he would just get out of the way, shaking his head. One of the places Fred would go to get out of the way was his patio in back of the house. This patio first became his space when Pat wanted him to quit smoking and wouldn't let him smoke in the house. Fred started going out to the patio to smoke. Eventually, a television went out to the patio and Fred would sit and watch ballgames in the patio. This wasn't just during nice weather...it was all year long. Fred's son-in-law, Guy Schultz, can give a good visual of Fred with his cap pulled down tight on his head, bundled up in his coat, shivering, having a brew, and watching his games. One weekend, Fred and Pat were out of town, so Beth and Guy ripped into the patio and put in some comfort features, working into the wee hours. Fred came home to walls to keep out the wind, a heater to stay warm, a fridge and other amenities. This

was truly a gift from their hearts. One thing Fred claimed not to be was an animal person, but Pat was and she enjoyed having animals around the house. Fred would tolerate dogs, but Pat wanted a cat, too. Fred was adamant about not having cats. Fred and Pat's young granddaughter, Delaney, mentioned to her grandmother one day that she too wanted a cat, but could not have one because her mother, Beth, was allergic to cats. Pat told Delaney that Delaney should ask Fred for a cat to keep at his house for her and grandma. Surely Fred would not turn down his granddaughter. Fred said no cat. But then every time he looked at Delaney that day, Delaney would stick out her lip and give Fred just a pitiful look. Delaney and Pat got a cat. The funny part was, these animals would follow Fred wherever he went in the house. He was like the Pied Piper with them. And if Fred went to the kitchen, the cat would get him stopped at the fridge, rub his legs and then stay by the fridge looking at Fred. Fred would complain to anyone who would listen about these animals, but Pat would just reply, they must be his; he was the one they followed around. Fred's soft spot, though, was for his grandchildren. Brock traveled around with Fred constantly as a youngster. When Fred was going to college, he would babysit his small grandkids between and after classes. And while he was very frugal with his step-children, he was just the opposite with his grandchildren. Brock called Fred "the Bank." The caricature of Fred the "Bank" in the video tribute was done by Brock. Going to Whistle Stop for candy was always a suggestion from Fred to his grandkids. He paid for A's on report cards. And when his granddaughter, Tori, won a horse event for 4-H, Fred offered to take her to Bozeman for another show. Fred would protect the kids from neighborhood bullies. And he was a daily visitor to Beth and Guy's house, walking the one block between them. Fred didn't say much or stay long; he just wanted to make sure everyone was okay. Fred and his grandkids were very lucky to have lived close. The memories they made together will be carried with Fred's grandchildren throughout their lives. A death has occurred and life will never be the same again. When that death is a parent, it seems to make us take a hard look at ourselves and the significance that parent has

had on the person we have become. As we mature and learn life's lessons, we began to understand and perhaps, appreciate our parents not just as parents but as people. Fred's step-daughter, Sheri, has written some thoughts about Fred to share with you. Sheri writes: "Father, What is a father? The provider, the protector, the strong force between you and the world. Or just a man trying to do the best he can in difficult times... God sent Fred into our lives when he was desperately needed and when he desperately needed someone too. Fred taught us values and how to appreciate people for who they are. Fred gave our family pride and the ability to lift our chin to the world and keep on truckin through life." Sheri goes on to comment about Fred's stubborn streak and about her own stubbornness. She remembers Fred's rules and her own "pushing the limit." Sheri concludes with these words: "He (Fred) did a good job. We all grew up to be contributing members of society. None of us lay on our back sides waiting for someone to help us. We pay our bills and take pride in what we have become. Good job, Fred. Who would have thought I would miss the saber sword finger wagging in my face. Go figure. I love you, Fred, and I will miss you. Sheri" Let us now listen to the hymn "How Great Thou Art" sung by Jim Pettersen. Song: "How Great Thou Art" Celebrant: It is an important day when we stop to bear witness to a person's life and times among us, the difference his living and dying has made to family and community, and to take time to express our grief and our memories. Thank you for being here for this important time. There is no finer tribute to Fred than the number of people who have come here today to remember him. Fred was a presence in his family, at work, to his community. Fred will be greatly missed. As the family grieves the loss of Fred, there will be many difficult moments. Some of these moments will be the 1sts – the 1st holidays, the 1st birthdays, the 1st anniversaries, - for at these times Fred's absence will be felt with a fresh sense of loss. Be very present during these times and honor the memory of this fine man. Fred Rilla will be alive as long as he is remembered and who could forget him? Because life is "oh-too-short" it is the stories Fred's life has created that will keep his memory and his

presence alive long into future generations. Are you familiar with the phrase “pennies from heaven?” You may notice as the family leaves the service today, they will be placing pennies with Fred. These pennies represent that they are thinking of Fred and sending him their love today. As Fred’s family members go back into their busy lives, when they find a penny on the ground or in some unexpected place, that “penny from heaven,” will remind them that Fred is thinking of them and sending his love and a kiss to them. Please take a moment now to say your good-byes to Fred as Reverend Hageman closes this life tribute service for Fred Rilla with a special prayer.

Tribute Wall



“ *Fred Rilla*

December 07, 2022 at 04:10 PM