



Jack Walton Baker

December 31, 1930 - December 21, 2009

GLENDIVE, MONTANA: Jack Walton Baker age 78, passed away on Thursday, December 17, 2009 at the Glendive Medical Center in Glendive. A Life Tribute Service will be held at 2:00 P.M. on Monday, December 21, 2009 in the Chapel of the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home in Glendive with Celebrant Sandy Silha and Reverend Robert Canen officiating. Private family interment will be held at a later date in the Dawson Memorial Cemetery. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive has been entrusted with the arrangements. Jack was born on December 31, 1930 in Glendive the son of Charles Walton and Ouida (Van Dyke) Baker. Jack was raised and educated in Glendive graduating from Dawson County High School with the class of 1948. After high school he attended North Dakota State School of Science in Whapeton, North Dakota for one semester before transferring to Dawson Community College and graduating with the class of 1950. Shortly after graduating from college Jack began working for Montana Dakota Utilities (MDU), where he was employed for 41 years. He was a gas serviceman and at the time of his retirement on June 30, 1991 he was the divisional gas superintendent. Jack married Patricia "Pat" Feisthamel in Glendive, on April 21, 1951, they have made their home in Glendive for over fifty years.. Jack was very handy with his hands as well as his tools. He had even built his own home and was known as the family handyman. He was a perfectionist; there was no need in doing a job unless you did it right. He enjoyed helping with many community events. He would lend a hand with anything that would help Glendive from

cleaning and painting area parks to helping build ballparks and the grandstands at the fairgrounds. Jack loved spending time with his grandchildren, never missing any of their sporting events. He enjoyed watching all sporting events, especially the Red Devils and the Dawson College Buccaneers. Jack was a Volunteer Fire Fighter for 20 years; a life time member of the Elks Lodge #1324 and a Dawson Community College BUCS Club Member. Jack was preceded in death by his parents and three sisters. Survivors include his wife Pat; two sons, Mike Baker and his wife Donna and Curt Baker; one daughter, Jill Skillestad and her husband Mike, all of Glendive; three grandchildren, Mindy Brown of Colorado Springs, Colorado and Whitney and Ashley Skillestad of Glendive; two great grandchildren; one sister, Charlotte Roberts of Seattle, Washington and numerous nieces and nephews. Remembrances and condolences may be shared with the family at: www.silvernale-silhafuneralhome.com Jack Walton Baker Life Tribute Service December, 21, 2009 Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home Chapel Glendive, Montana Welcome: Master of Ceremonies Opening Prayer: Reverend Robert Canen Eulogy: Celebrant Jack Walton Baker, "Mr. Fix-it; Jack of all trades;" will be remembered by his family, his friends, his community as a giver, a doer, a volunteer; the guy who was always there to take care of things, to build, to repair, to help. Jack used his vitality and know-how to fix and improve the world around him. Born, raised and educated in Glendive, Jack never strayed far from his roots. The longest Jack was ever away from this area was when he went to Wapheton, North Dakota, to college on a football scholarship. He was gone one semester. A good student, Jack loved sports. Growing up, he was always quite short. But when he was about a sophomore in high school, he got his growth spurt and grew to be about 5' 10". Jack still had quite short legs, and he would tell his granddaughters that somewhere in the world there was a Chinaman walking around with his real legs. When granddaughter Mindy Brown saw Yao Ming playing in the NBA, she told her grandpa that she had found his legs. Jack played high school basketball, football, and tennis. After his time playing football in Wapheton, Jack returned to Glendive and

attended Dawson Community College, and played basketball for the Buccaneers. Irregardless of his short legs, Jack was their starting center. Along with all his athletic skills, Jack's legs had huge calves, and he had quite a vertical jump. Jack's wife, Pat, couldn't remember Jack's course of study in college; she was sure it was pool and ping-pong. Jack did graduate from DCC with an associate's degree. Jack's interest in sports was lifelong. He coached his son, Mike's, baseball team, and served as president of the Babe Ruth league. He attended all the activities of his children and grandchildren and was their biggest fan. He was always involved in the booster clubs for both the high school and the college. Throughout his life, Jack, was a huge supporter of all the local teams, attending many games and tournaments, whether he had any family on the teams or not. Jack's wife, Pat, says she and Jack knew each other from the first grade. Pat remembers all the other girls in school liked Jack, and it wasn't until Jack was in college that things got serious between Jack and Pat. They married, had three children, sons, Mike and Curt, and later they had their "oops" child, or as the boys affectionately call Jill, "the mistake." Pat recalls that Jack gave her candy when each of the boys were born, and she received roses after Jill's birth. Jack and Pat raised their children and spent the fifty plus years of their marriage in Glendive. As a father, Jack was very hands-on. He was always there for his family, and always doing things for them. Besides his family, perhaps Jack's greatest accomplishment was to build his home. He began by digging and finishing the basement, and he moved his family into it in 1959. Jack would finish his day job at MDU, come home and began his night job of working on his home. He completed the upstairs five years after moving into the basement. He did everything himself, except for the perfa-taping and laying the carpet. Pat did the painting, and he would have friends help with the concrete work. The house was built into the side of a hill, and Jack dug, shoveled, and hauled out the dirt by hand to a dump truck to haul away. It was during this phase of the building that his back was injured. It slowed him down but certainly did not

stop him. After he finished the upstairs, he later added on to the house, including a large deck from which he could watch the baseball games across the street at Whipkey Park. As his son, Curt, observed, their home was never finished, but always a work in progress. Although Jack retired from MDU after 41 years, he never retired from working. Even into his late sixties and early seventies, it was hard to outwork Jack. Our community benefited from his energy, skills, and dedication to many projects that enhanced this community. If a project needed volunteer workers, Jack was there. He was there at the fairgrounds to work on the grandstands; he was at the Gazebo park to install sprinklers; he lent his expertise, time, and energy to the college baseball and softball fields, to the girls' softball complex, to Whipkey Field, and to the picnic shelter at Lloyd Square park. With three grown children living in town, Jack was certainly their go-to guy. He was the first one called when something broke or didn't work properly. And he would have been upset had he not been the first one called. Jack was an almost daily visitor, and if he noticed something needing to be done or fixed, he just came and did it. There were times when daughter, Jill, and her husband, Mike Skillestad, would be awakened early on a Saturday morning to Jack planing a door that was sticking, mowing their lawn, or removing snow from their sidewalks. Jack might leave a list of seasonal maintenance duties by the furnaces or for the sprinklers of his children. Jack had designed, hand-dug, and installed sprinklers for his yard and for his children's yards. Jack designed those systems to be self-draining, so they did not need to be blown out in the fall. For all the help he gave to others, perhaps the most difficult thing for Jack to do was to ask for help. He never wanted to impose on others with his needs. Jack was an early champion of recycling, practicing that idea before it even had a name. He never, never, threw things away. He was sure it would come in handy someday to fix things, and many times it did. Son Curt, when growing up, was known to be hard on vehicles. Jack spent many a week-end "fixing" Curt's cars, and generally there were pieces and parts left over. Jack claimed to have enough left-over parts from Curt's many accidents to build a

whole new car. Jill and Mike S. have a garden cart that probably doesn't have an original part on it, from Jack "fixing" it so many times. Pat found it difficult to get new things, appliances and such, because Jack could always "fix" what they had. Jill still has the avocado colored stove from early in her marriage, because Jack kept "fixing" it, not understanding that Jill just wanted a new one. Jack had a special talent for being able to build or repair about anything, or make something out of nothing. After Jill and Mike S. married, their first apartment had only a tub, no shower. Jack had the unique ability to look at a lawn chair's legs and see them as a shower. It was the best working shower Jill and Mike S. ever had. Jack was very creative in his "fixing." Jack had a very generous heart, but he was frugal with his money. He loved to shop... sales. And he loved to grocery shop. He watched the flyers for sales and used coupons. If something were on sale, Jack would stock-up on that item. Mike, Curt and Jill often found milk or cheese delivered to their fridges on a regular basis. Jack was constantly reminding Pat, the kids, the grandkids to turn off the lights. When he would reshingle a roof, he would pull and straighten all the nails from the old shingles to use again. He would save newspapers and take them to Billings to be recycled. If he couldn't get them there, he would have his son Mike take them. And Jack knew exactly how much the papers weighed and what money he would get. That money all went into the grandkids accounts. Jack enjoyed walking, and when he walked he would pick up cans to recycle. In all that Jack did, he was a detail man, and a perfectionist. Neat and organized, he could drive you a bit crazy. When Jack first retired, Pat discovered after 30 years of vacuuming, she really didn't know how to vacuum. Jack discovered he did. Jack also organized her sewing basket...Pat couldn't find a thing. Pictures in his home and the homes of his children had to be level. Projects and his fixing things were best left to Jack because he was so particular. Whatever Jack did from projects to vacations were planned in detail. Jack went through reams of post-it notes, reminders of his plans. A hobby of Jack's was to write letters; letters to politicians telling them what was wrong with the world, and letters to companies about parts

that were defective, and needed replacing or how to fix them. Pat says for all the writing he did, she couldn't get him to write even one Christmas card. Jack was very good with numbers, and could do math in his head and keep running totals with little effort. He would go to the bank and get his cash in specific denominations. He knew what everything cost before he bought, and knew to the penny what change would be left. He might send a family member on an errand, give them so much money to pay a bill, and then with this much left over, they maybe should stop and get a couple of gallons of milk that were on sale, and that would leave this amount change. A childhood friend of Jill's, Rita McPherson, still thinks of Jack every time she goes to Billings. Rita sometimes accompanied Jill and the family to tournaments in Billings. Jack would take the inside lane on all the curves in the road to Billings because he had figured out that he saved 1.8 miles. So if you get a bit bored on your next trip to Billings, do as Rita does; pretend you're a Nascar driver, take the inside lane, think of Jack, and smile. Jack loved to do Soduku; of course he would, it's a numbers game. He loaned granddaughter, Whitney Skillestad, money for her car. For each payment she made to him, she received a receipt with a smiley face. Jack did all the family's tax returns. He knew how much he needed to spend on his Discover card each month to begin earning his points. Jack was pretty amazing with numbers. Jack had a dry sense of humor. When he and Pat would leave a store to go to the car, he knew Pat wouldn't remember where the car was, so he always held back a bit and would let her start off in the wrong direction, before he reeled her in. Once, they were shopping and Pat needed to talk to a sales clerk. Jack directed her to a store mannequin for help. For not being a very big man, Jack loved to eat and had a huge appetite. Lunch was always at noon and supper was at five, unless he was eating out, then it was at 4:30 because there was still a lunch rate. He also had a very big sweet tooth, his favorite being chocolate; chocolate cake with chocolate frosting, fudge with no nuts. He loved a buffet where he could eat lots of meat and potatoes and about five desserts. Mindy remembers his

lunches of cheeseburgers, Lay's potato chips and a huge bowl of ice cream. All the granddaughters remember orthodontist appointments followed by frostys at Wendy's. Despite his appetite, Jack held his adult weight to about 195. And with all his working and walking, he remained very fit. Friday nights were Jack's night out. He would walk to the Elks to have a couple beers with his friends, and then walk home. Evenings, he and Pat would watch television, Jack particularly liked the Golden Girls. He enjoyed playing cards, and his hand held electronic poker games. As a grandfather, Jack was a soft touch and treated his granddaughters as he treated no one else. And they in turn, thought of their grandpa as Mindy termed it, "a superhero; indestructible." All three of his granddaughters, Mindy, Whitney, and Ashley, spent many hours with their grandpa, reading, playing board games, such as Miss America, playing hide and seek with a thimble, and playing card games of war and playday, which he let them win. They remember swinging and sledding at the park. They remember his support of and attendance to all their sports and activities. Ashley liked her grandpa's suggestions of what she should work on to get better at in her sports. Jack particularly liked to watch Ashley run track. Mindy loved going to swimming lessons with her grandpa and riding bike with him, those summers she would come to stay. A special memory of her grandpa are the whisker rubs he would give her before he shaved. Whitney remembers her grandpa coming to school to walk home with her and bringing her the requested crackers; two with margarine and two with butter. All the girls were given money for their grades, and grandpa would often slip them spending money. Whitney and Ashley received a gas card a week from grandpa, and he has bank accounts set up for all of them. When Whitney got a job, he would tease her about giving him a couple of bucks so he could have a beer at the Elks. Mindy tells about when her daughter, Jordan, was born and how it took Jack three months to hold Jordan because he said she was too small. When he finally did, he walked Jordan all around the house pointing out everything to Jordan... "there's the clock, this is my chair, etc." He repeated this ritual on many occasions. Jack was a fun, a loving and giving grandfather.

His granddaughters remember his gruff voice, his rough hands, his white Reeboks, his jeans. They respected his hardworking nature, his stubbornness, his helpfulness. They also respected and enjoyed the caring way Jack treated their grandmother. And that is Jack Baker, "Mr. Fix-it." Hardworking, helpful, caring, a stubborn perfectionist; frugal with money, but so very giving of time, talents, and matters of the heart. A family man, a community man. A good man. Jack Walton touched many lives and hearts. He will be greatly missed. Let us now listen to a hymn chosen by the family as we spend a few moments with our personal memories of Jack. Song: "How Great Thou Are Art" Closing: Celebrant Jack was always a picture of health. About six weeks ago, after not feeling well for a time, he finally went to a doctor and was diagnosed with cancer, colon cancer, something a sister had died from. This diagnosis was quite a blow; everyone expected Jack to live into his nineties. It was especially difficult for Jack, as being ill and dependent on others was totally foreign to him. He was the one who always took care of everyone's needs. It saddened his family, especially his son, Mike, that after all he had done for all of them, Jack would feel he was a burden, because of course, he was not. Today his family, his friends, our community mourn the loss of Jack Baker. Pat, Mike, Curt, Jill and Mike, Mindy, Whitney, Ashley and all Jack's family, we grieve with you and we grieve for you. As friends and community, let us be aware of how difficult the loss of Jack is for his family, and especially how difficult this holiday season will be for them. Jack's absence will be particularly noticeable. Jack's granddaughters remarked while sharing their memories, how many more memories will probably come to mind after today, that could have been shared here. Be available to Jack's family these next days and weeks. Listen to the memories of Jack, and share those you have of him with his family. Let them know how important Jack was to you, and how significant his touch was in your life. It is the best gift we can give them. We seem to not be aware of the true value of someone in our life until they are gone. Certainly there is love and appreciation, but its full measure truly stands out when they are no longer present. Jack's son-in-law,

Mike Skillestad, worries that maybe thanks for all Jack did for everyone was not told to Jack enough. Mike S. expressed for all the family that they really don't know how they will get along without Jack, because of all the things he did for them. It is not what a person acquires in his lifetime that is important, but rather it is what he leaves behind. Jack has left his family many gifts, many memories, and a legacy of examples on living a good life. Jack's value in their lives was priceless. "To have lived well, laughed often, loved much To have gained the respect of intelligent men and the love of children To have left the world better and to have appreciated earth's beauty and not failed to express it To have looked for the best in others and to have given the best of yourself That is achievement." Jack's family will carry him with them throughout their lives and in their hearts. His touch has been great, and he will be greatly missed. As we say our good-byes to Jack Walton Baker, we also say Thank You, Jack, for all you have given to us. It is our hope that you may rest in peace. Let us close Jack Baker's life tribute service with a prayer from Reverend Canen. Prayer: Reverend Canen Song: "Amazing Grace"

Tribute Wall



“ *Jack Walton Baker*

December 07, 2022 at 04:10 PM