



James John Hrubes

May 10, 1916 - July 11, 2011

Glendive, Montana: James "Jim" John Hrubes, age 95, passed away Friday, July 8, 2011 at the Glendive Medical Center in Glendive. Visitation will be held from 9:00 A.M. until 11:00 A.M. on Monday, July 11, 2011 at the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home in Glendive. A Life Tribute Service will be held at 11:00 A.M. on Monday, July 11, 2011 in the Chapel of the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home in Glendive with Celebrant Sandy Silha officiating. Interment with military honors will be held in the Dawson County Cemetery in Glendive. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive has been entrusted with the arrangements. Jim was born on May 10, 1916 in Waubun, Minnesota, the son of John and Anna (Vesely) Hrubes. Jim served in the United States Army during World War II, from February 19, 1941 until his Honorable Discharge on August 19, 1945. Jim met Esther Hagen who became his wife on October 28, 1945. They lived in Helena, Montana for a year before moving to Lindsay, Montana in 1946, where they lived on the former Frank Bren farm. Jim moved off the farm and into Glendive in 1988. He continued to farm and he seeded and harvested his last wheat crop in 1999 at the age of 83. Jim always thought "outside the box" as a farmer and he created the first dual tired tractor in the country. He was an accomplished welder, developing a cab for a farm tractor using the top of an old car. Until then, cabs were non-existent. Jim could fix anything and was a master inventor, his motto was "the difficult takes a little while to fix... the impossible, takes just a little longer." He loved his television and was one of the first farmers in the county to have one. Jim's

sons really had a good time climbing the tall TV tower much to Esther's chagrin. He loved his Shih-tzu dog, Misty, who made him feel young. Jim also had a love of music. He was an accomplished accordionist playing at box socials in country schools and Bohemian dances. He also delighted in playing for his fellow veterans at the Eastern Montana Veteran's Home in Glendive. Jim was preceded in death by his parents; wife, Esther; son, James; brothers, Gerald, Joe, Ben and John and sisters, Mary, Rose and Adeline. Survivors include sons, Ronald (Irene) of Lewistown, Montana, Donald of Denver, Colorado and Allen (Amber) of Glendive; daughter, Eliese of Glendive; seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Remembrances and condolences may be shared with the family at: www.silvernale-silhafuneralhome.com. Eulogy: "The difficult takes a little while to fix...the impossible takes just a little longer." When you think about it, those words say a great deal about the man who spoke them, James John Hrubes. To Jim they were not just words but a way of life, and a part of his character. Here was a man who looked forward to life's challenges with the confidence that he could fix, repair, remake, correct, or better the world around him. Jim's tremendous work ethic and enthusiasm allowed him to make time and to take time to constantly test himself and his ideas for that satisfactory end result. Throughout his life, Jim had a questioning mind and loved to take things apart and put them back together, exploring how they worked. For 95 years, Jim looked forward to, enjoyed, and actively met head on the challenges life gave him. Jim was one of eight children born to Czechoslovakian immigrant parents. The family worked and moved from Minnesota west through the Dakotas and into Montana, working on farms in rural communities. Jim's formal education ended after the eighth grade, and from there, as his daughter-in-law Amber puts it, "Jim attended the school of hard knocks." At age 14, Jim began to live and work for neighboring farmers to earn his room and board, easing the burden on his parents. Most of his teen years and his early adult years came during the depression. As a young adult, Jim worked for the Civilian Conservation Corps on government projects. One bright spot during his

younger days was that Jim and his brothers all played musical instruments, and would play for socials and dances in the rural communities. Jim enjoyed music and became an accomplished accordionist. As an adult, Jim continued to entertain with his accordion at family events, including grandson Jonathon's wedding. Jim would also share his music at the veteran's home and the nursing home for the residents' enjoyment. The music you heard playing as you came in today was Jim and his accordion. In 1941, at age 24, Jim joined the United States Army. As his two year enlistment was ending, Pearl Harbor was attacked and we entered World War II. Jim remained in the Army, serving our nation in the Pacific theater of the war. Jim encountered a great deal of combat action and death during this period of his service to our great nation and to its people. During his time in the army, Jim did not drink or play cards. Instead he sent his paychecks home to his sister, Rose. He earned extra money by providing services to his fellow soldiers, such as haircuts, tailoring of uniforms, and watch repair. When Jim was honorably discharged in 1945, he returned to Montana. A fellow soldier and friend he had served with, Grant Hagen, introduced his sister, Esther, to Jim. In a matter of months, Jim and Esther were married and began their life journey of 53 years together. They lived about a year in Helena, Montana, before moving to eastern Montana. The money Jim had sent home which Rose had saved for him enabled Jim to purchase a farm of his own near Lindsay, Montana. Jim was not a man who necessarily loved the land. Jim was a man who loved the challenges of farming that land, making the land productive, planting and raising crops and bringing them to harvest. Farming brought out Jim's many talents, tested his intelligence, his tenacious spirit, his sense of humor. His aptitude for tinkering, fixing and repairing, flourished. Because farm machinery breakdowns occur often, and are inconvenient and costly, Jim became his own best resource. He was an expert welder and mechanic, making do with old parts the he would rework or repair, or he would invent new parts. He used whatever tools or supplies were available or that he could create. They might not be pretty but

they would be functional. It wasn't always feasible to run to town for parts, so Jim became the "master of improvisation", fixing things for now until it could be done right later. Allen recalls an example of his dad improvising. Jim replaced a part in the carburetor of an auger with a new part that he fashioned from a tuna can. Jim was confronted with many problems in farming, which he would solve by "thinking out of the box". Jim often hauled his grain to market in the winter. If the motor on the auger wouldn't start from the cold, Jim might take the motor off the auger and put it next to a running truck motor to warm it up, or maybe heat up a kettle of water to warm the carburetor to get it started. Overhead electrical lines often were in the way of Jim moving his farm equipment, so Jim got the proper materials and buried all the electrical lines on the farm. Jim also recognized ways to improve the world he lived in and worked in. He was a master of invention, including designing and building tractors with dual tires, and tractors with a cab. In addition to raising their crops, Jim and Esther raised their five children, sons James, Ronald, Donald, Allen, and daughter Eliese. Jim did not teach his children life lessons by telling them; he showed them with his example as they lived and worked with him on the farm. They watched his resourcefulness, his knack to fix and repair, his quiet resolve to solve problems. He set an example with his work ethic. Jim would be up and farming or summer fallowing by 4 am. At the end of a days work, all the machinery was readied for the next day. Jim was always a good provider for his family. Not liking banks, but choosing to pay as he went, Jim often did others things than farm to earn money to support himself and his family. There was a time that Jim drove a taxi in Glendive. When they moved to town during the winter because the kids were in high school, Jim worked as a welder for Crisafulli's. Jim only depended on himself to live the lifestyle that he could afford. But it was not all work that is remembered. Jim's children remember their dad's smile and sense of humor. Jim always loved a good joke. Because Jim had a bit different thought process than most, he often would tease and question his family. Eliese tells of a drive down the Bitterroot Valley near Missoula and coming to a sign announcing Ravalli County. Her

dad started massacrings the name. "Ravalli, that's what's played in the Army?" "No that's Reveille, the opposite of Taps." "Oh, isn't that some kind of macaroni?" "No, that's ravioli." Jim had a great time with his family pretending to be clueless. Son Don tells another story about his father's unique thought process and sense of humor. Jim came up with what he termed "the perfect mouse trap." Take a cardboard box, putting the open side on the floor. Put cheese under the box. Cut a small hole about a half inch from the floor. Tape a razor blade across the bottom of the hole, sharp side exposed in the hole. When the mouse sticks his head into the hole to find the cheese and turns his head back and forth and back and forth looking, he will cut his own throat. Jim probably had a big grin over the visual effects of that one. Whatever Jim was doing, working, playing or just thinking, he had a lifelong habit of whistling. Jim had put two-way radios in the tractors, but often left his mike open. You were then serenaded by his whistling, and he was very good at it. Grandson Brandon admired it so much that he, too, has taken up whistling. Included in Jim's family were two special pets. Allen and Amber gave Esther a dog as a pet. Jim was not fond of most animals. The dog was named Margo, after a character in a soap on TV. It was only a matter of days before it was evident that Jim and Margo had formed a special bond. Eliese's observation of their relationship was that "something magical happened." She says her dad "became more careful of others feelings and thought of others more...When Margo died, Jim got Misty, a Shih-tzu dog...Jim was 89 years old at the time, and the love affair continued. He said Misty kept him young and happy." Enjoying life and its challenges seemed to be something Jim was good at, but he also had his ways to relax. When he was in the South Pacific, Jim had enjoyed swimming both off the beaches of the islands he was stationed at and during his R&R in Australia. With a young family in the 1950's, Jim provided everyone a chance of R&R, right out there on the farm. He had a large swimming pool in the farmyard for all to enjoy. Another favorite activity while growing up that son Ron remembers are chocolate malts, and the \$1/ car nights at the drive-in movies. And then came television. Jim loved television.

He was the first one in the area to get a TV. And he got the biggest screen he could get. He built a 100 foot tower for his antenna, so he would have good reception and even get two channels. He became in more of a hurry than ever to finish the day's work so he could watch TV. He enjoyed Bonanza and westerns, war films, watching boxing, and the soaps. Jim did love his gadgets and toys, with TV being a favorite, as were his cars. Jim loved big, powerful, modern cars. Jim had a heavy foot. He was always in a hurry because he had so many things to get done. That worked in the early days when Montana had no speed limit. But it did cause a bit of trouble when the speed limits arrived. It didn't slow Jim down much, only when he got caught, or when Esther would put her foot down about his speeding. His favorite time to travel was in the cold winter. Having experienced the depression and traveling by sleigh with heated bricks to warm your feet, Jim loved going down the road and being cozy and warm in his big cars while it froze outside. Besides his toys and gadgets, TV, and cars, and tinkering in his shop, Jim enjoyed a variety of things. He loved puzzles, and Eliese often worked with him on jigsaw puzzles. He liked to receive gifts, and Don was great for giving gifts that were brainteasers needing to be solved. Right up Jim's alley. Jim enjoyed Louis L'Moure books. In his dreams, Jim wanted to live during the age of those westerns, and be a cowboy. He thought horses a beautiful animal, and loved a good horse. Horses he didn't consider good he called outlaws, and would quickly get rid of them. Jim thought every man should have a good saddle and he had one made for him by the Miles City Saddlery in the 1950's. That saddle, along with the post he built to hang it on, his bridle and hat are displayed here today. Jim gave the saddle to his granddaughter, Layton, who shares his love of horses. Jim was always interested in Layton's activities and could always talk horse stories to her. His last belly laugh came from a story about Layton, her horse, and this past 4th of July parade. Jim enjoyed cooking, his speciality was French toast and sausage, and chicken. After he retired and moved into Glendive, he gardened for a time. His strawberries

were luscious and he had an apple tree that he would make dehydrated apple slices from. His neighbors didn't appreciate his innovative method of keeping birds from eating the apples. He put a radio in the tree on high volume, sometimes forgetting to shut it off at night. Jim also got a boat and camper and loved to go fishing in Minnesota. His first trip on a jet plane came when he, Ron and Ron's wife, Irene, traveled to Germany and the Czech Republic. It was a wonderful trip for Jim. He was disappointed when he tried to communicate in Czech; too many German words had infiltrated the language and it was hard visit with the native Czechs. But he thoroughly enjoyed visiting the area where his family had come from. Jim's grandchildren brought out the softer side of Jim. He was at a time in life when he could relax a bit and enjoy them, and they him. He impressed them with his activeness and his ability to work at the age he was. They enjoyed his sense of humor, his hugs, the way he drove so fast, and the times they spent with their grandparents out on the farm, especially during harvest, experiencing the special qualities of rural life. Granddaughter Irene says that Jim was called Granddad, not grandpa. He said he was a dad not a pa. Brandon remembers what a stickler Granddad was for doing things the right way. Brandon was about 7, Granddad about 70. Granddad was teaching Brandon to bowl. Brandon wanted to bowl granny style, pushing the ball with both hands. Granddad was rolling strikes and trying to show Brandon how to bowl correctly. Bowling Granddad's way, Brandon was rolling gutter balls. Finally frustrated, he rolled a granny ball, and got a strike. Not impressed, Granddad insisted Brandon bowl the right way. For all of Jim's accomplishments in farming, and as an inventor, mechanic, welder, and master of tinkering, his greatest accomplishment and what he was most proud of and enjoyed the most was raising his five children and the family they became. Jim taught his children the importance of treating others well, how to help your neighbors, and as a family, to take care of each other. Jim didn't have time or patience for inconsiderate people. Knowing the importance of meeting challenges, Jim was proud of his family members when they pushed to expand their knowledge and better themselves. Eliese

remembers when she was taking a medical transcription course at the college. Her dad was looking at the textbook and commented on all the long words. As he walked away, his words to Eliese were simply, "I'm proud of you." During their marriage, Jim and Esther shared a life of loving and dedicated partnership in building a family and a farm. When Esther became ill with cancer, Jim became her caregiver. Her death and the loneliness it brought may have been one of the greatest challenges Jim ever faced. The greatest lesson Jim probably learned was from his wife Esther. When the children had left home and would come to visit, Jim would greet them and say good-bye with a handshake. Esther gave Jim what Eliese calls "a blessing out." Esther told Jim to stop shaking hands and start hugging his family. Not having been raised that way, Jim was a bit tentative about hugging at first, but he came around big time, and hugging became very important to him. Grandson Brandon, who lived in Colorado and hated the long rides to Montana, claims that Granddad's good hugs upon arrival always made him feel much better. Jim Hrubes had a zest for life and its challenges that many of us long to have. In 95 years of healthy, productive living, working, and enjoying his world and the people in it, Jim has certainly set many examples of living a good life. At the least Jim's life has been colorful and interesting; at most, Jim's life exemplifies what a good man can achieve. We are lucky to have had him in our world. Jim Hrubes was greatly loved and he will be greatly missed.

Tribute Wall



“ *James John Hrubes*

December 07, 2022 at 04:10 PM