



## Keith P. Guelff

February 18, 1928 - July 6, 2010

GLENDIVE, MONTANA: Keith Paul Guelff, after 82 interesting years, moved on to his next great adventure on Friday, July 2, 2010,. He was a genuine individual who lived his life fully. Keith realized his dreams and adventures and urged his family to live the same. A Life Tribute Service will be held at 1:00 P.M. on Tuesday, July 6, 2010 at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Glendive with Celebrant Sandy Silha and Fr. Joseph Ponessa officiating. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive has been entrusted with the arrangements. Keith was born on February 18, 1928, in Glendive, the son of Michael Nicholas and Florence (Russ) Guelff. He was raised and educated in Glendive, graduating from Dawson County High School with the class of 1946. Keith won the hand of Hazel Margaret Walker on March 3, 1947. He attended and graduated from Carroll College in Helena, Montana with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Bio-Chemistry. After college he returned to the Glendive area. His first job after graduating college was teaching at a rural school. When he moved on, he continued to teach in his own unique way, which was by doing. Keith taught and talked to anyone willing to listen and learn. Keith served as Dawson County Clerk and Recorder before he and Hazel purchased a farm 8 miles west of Glendive where he got to do one of his favorite things, watching things grow. Keith had a passion for hunting and collecting rocks and minerals. This fall he collected a pile of agates so large you can see them from the satellites. He had traveled to Australia seven times, exploring the outback in an old Scout, getting covered with red dirt and

occasionally getting lost while hunting for his treasured opals. He also was an avid outdoors man who enjoyed hunting, on his favorite horse "Shadow", on trails that would challenge even the younger party members. He was preceded in death by his parents; his brother Bob and his sister Marguerite Eiker Reed . Survivors include his wife Hazel of Glendive; his daughter, Donna St. George and her husband George of Billings, Montana; his son, Michael Guelff and his wife Sandi of Glendive; and his daughter, Dalice Downs and her husband Andy of Lindsay, Montana; five grandchildren and nine great grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews. Keith Paul Guelff Life Tribute Service Sacred Heart Catholic Church Glendive, Montana July 6, 2010 Song: "Living In The Country" Welcome: Master of Ceremonies Opening prayer: Father Ponessa Video Tribute Eulogy: Celebrant Keith Paul Guelff was a man who viewed life as an opportunity to live a series of unending adventures. He looked at the simplest of tasks and at the most complex challenges as a chance to learn and experience all the interesting facets of life. Keith was undaunted by adversity, and would look for the opportunity in the problem. He would acknowledge the facts of the situation and then decide what to do about it, deal with it, and move on. Whether Keith was born with these character traits or acquired them at a young age is unknown. But they served him well throughout his life. To listen to the stories about Keith, you would guess him to be a large, powerful man. In stature, Keith was only 5'3". But he was large in presence and powerful by the life force that drove him. At the age of 4, Keith suffered from a high fever and was expected to die. But Keith had a new bicycle, and when the fever broke, the first thing Keith wanted to do was ride that new bike. His family felt that the fever stunted his physical growth, but his energy and his thirst for knowledge flourished. Raised and educated in Glendive, Keith was in his teens and working at the hospital when he first got acquainted with a co-worker, Hazel Walker. After graduation from high school, Keith and Hazel were married. Of his marriage, Keith was known to say, "he was the best handled man in the county." Keith attended Carroll College in Helena, Montana. Upon his

graduation from college, Keith was awaiting acceptance to medical school. It was a letter he never received. His parents received that letter of acceptance, but choose instead to withhold the letter, as they encouraged Keith to return to Glendive to help them with their many business ventures. Keith returned to Glendive. Even after discovering that he could have went on to the medical profession, Keith never complained about the direction life took, as he had fully committed himself to taking advantage of the opportunities in front of him. Keith and Hazel eventually purchased a farm eight miles west of Glendive, where they raised their family of two daughters, Donna and Dalice, and their son, Mike. Keith started out raising sheep because they were cheaper, and as he would say with his wry sense of humor, "sheep were easier to kick around." Eventually he raised cows, and then cows and sheep. Keith would say "there was nothing dumber than a cow except the man who owned one." It was the farming Keith enjoyed. He applied his intelligence and science degree to his farming, experimenting and improving his land and crops. Keith loved to watch things grow. Keith was a hard worker. Right along side of Keith was Hazel, helping with the farm work. Later, as the children became big enough to help, they too learned the ways of farm life. Keith believed that children didn't learn unless they did things, and he allowed, ordered, trusted the kids to do about anything. His mantra being, do it with caution. Caution meant doing things with enough intelligence to not hurt yourself or others. Sometimes, Keith would himself forget this. Daughter-in-law Sandi had a pair of jeans she kept for a long time that had the Guelff brand burned into the rear thanks to Keith. Luckily, that was as deep as the brand went. Keith always encouraged and sometimes demanded that those around him push themselves to try harder, do more, reach further in all they attempted. If a kid and later a grandkid couldn't get something done, Keith might say "I thought he could do it" or "they just don't make kids as tough as they used to." If there was trouble and Keith was angry, he'd say it was "one of you three kids", and he'd punish them all to be sure he got the culprit. If he knew who the troublemakers were, even if you

were in the vicinity, you were in trouble too, guilt by association.

Granddaughter Connie soon learned to stay away from the grandsons when they were out at grandpa's farm. Even grandson, Mick, could sometimes see trouble coming by watching what others were doing, and figured out to go in the house, before grandpa got wind of the trouble. Keith did encourage everyone to learn, be creative and build things. He once got the grandkids a welder, and as kids will, their imagination went over the limits a bit. Keith found them welding nuts and bolts together to make a cannon that they were preparing to shoot. Even Keith had to rethink the welder as a tool for the kids. Keith was very innovative at solving problems. He could think out of the box and come up with some very unique solutions. An example of this was when he was building a house. The neighborhood kids kept coming over to play at the construction site, which was a bit dangerous and a cause for concern. Keith solved that problem very efficiently. He set out a bucket of tar, and put some sticks in it for all the kids to play with. When the kids went home that day, their mothers saw to it that they did not return. The problem was solved. Keith loved to talk and even more he loved to engage people in conversations. But even if you didn't hold up your end of the conversation, he would still continue giving you information, or telling a story, or a joke. If a joke was funny once, it would be funny embellished and told 35 times more. Keith also loved to "zing" people. It was a bit of a test to see if you would dare come back at him, which he enjoyed. You definitely did not want him to find out you had a weak spot. He would show no mercy, and use it against you every chance he got, all in the effort to make you stronger. Keith lived life "his way". That could be a bit tough on those around him if "his way" wasn't your way. Mike says in working with his dad, they would disagree on how something should be done on the farm, or how something should be fixed. After discussion and debate about the why and how, it was usually resolved by letting whoever had started the project, finish it. Sometimes, it just came down to each one giving a little. Such was the case with the pick-up seat. Mike is quite a bit taller than Keith, and both tired of adjusting the seat to fit them

when they drove. So they compromised and adjusted the seat to the middle. Keith had to stretch a bit; Mike had to scrunch a bit. But the dispute was over. Keith had a legendary temper. As Donna put it, just when you thought you had done something that would make him kill you, his intellect would kick in and it wasn't so bad. It was the little things that really got to him. But if you truly needed help, Keith was there to support and encourage. When daughter Donna's husband, George, and she went back east for George to attend school, and things weren't going well, it was Keith who helped George stay the course. Learning and knowledge were very important to Keith and he believed everyone should always be trying to learn. His own love and knowledge of history and geology was respected by all who knew Keith, and he was always researching and learning more. Keith felt the one thing you should learn from going to school is just how little you knew and the most important thing school should teach you is how to keep learning. It was Keith who loaned money to a friend of the family, Gary Kuntz, to go to college. It was also Keith who encouraged Gary to take his national boards for being a CPA while Gary was still in college. Gary was one of the few students still in college to pass the board. And when Gary had 9 operations in 16 months, Keith stepped up with the kind of support a father would give. Gary thought of Keith as a second father. He felt Keith was a man you could honestly and openly trust, who spoke from the heart with straightforward, intelligent advice. When granddaughter Connie was caught short of money between buying and selling homes, Keith said he had a windfall and helped her out with a loan. It was a loan he didn't let her pay back. Daughter Donna says her father was not a man who talked about feelings. Keith was a man who did things. He loved going to Mexico, and when he went he would take bags of stuffed animals that he had picked up at garage sales or the Attic, and give them to kids in the orphanages in Mexico. Grandson, Aaron, had caught a sailfish and a marlin on a fishing trip in Mexico, which Keith talked him into donating to the orphanage. There was one trip to Mexico when members of the family traveled with Keith and Hazel. Sandi says that Keith had long lists of things

they were going to do while in Mazatlan. He just wore everyone out with doing things. When everyone would get back to the hotel and want to relax, Keith would be gone, out and about, doing and seeing more. Daughter Dalice says her father told her more than once when encouraging her to “do” things, that you only slept when there was nothing to do, otherwise get out there and experience things. Keith always had many things to do. When he wasn't farming, he might be fixing. The carpet in the house had grease spots from machinery and equipment brought in at night to be fixed. As was mentioned, he loved to build and create. Hunting trips took up many days in the fall. Elk trips to western Montana with family and friends were an annual event. George would come to Glendive for pheasant, antelope, and deer hunts with Keith and Mike out in the breaks. Grandson Christopher remembers his grandpa always having candy with him in camp, and how Keith sure appreciated when someone would bring sweets to camp. Christopher's wife sent cookies and Keith told Christopher he should keep her around just for the cookies. Whenever he hunted, Keith would ride his favorite horse, Shadow. They would go over goat trails that no man or horse should have been on. Christopher says Keith and Shadow hunted every year he could remember, and they both just got older and stayed closer to camp. Shadow was 33 years old when Keith put him down. Keith was a treasure hunter. The only places Keith would shop was garage sales, the Attic, and Border Steel. He loved getting treasures at a bargain. Dalice took him to Billings and the Goodwill store, but he thought people in Billings were crazy to pay Goodwill prices, which he loudly proclaimed to Dalice in the Goodwill store. Keith would give away many of the treasures he found. Stuffed animals went south of the border. Sandi says Keith bought a down winter coat and gave it to Mike. It was too small. Sandi took it back to the Attic, and Keith bought it again and gave it to Mike. This happened three times until Sandi told Mike to burn it so they wouldn't get it back. Keith had collected 17 down vests at one time. Connie received a camel colored belted leather jacket with big lapels that did not fit

her or her husband. Keith was very generous, just not always practical with his treasures. But Keith's life-long passion was rock hunting. He grew up with a father who hunted agates. Keith got interested in opals, and spent many days and trips hunting these treasures. He also had a stall of the garage for a rock shop, where he made the jewelry. Everywhere he went he would bring back rocks. Keith's dream was to find El Dorado. Hazel finally told Keith, "you're 60 years old, when are you going to do it?" It was all the permission he needed to follow his dream. He began to spend 6 months a year, over in Australia, tramping the outback, looking for treasure in the red dirt. Chris remembers grandpa flying back into Billings. Keith would bring his dirty, stinky socks that were filled with rocks out of his worn suitcase, and tell them stories of his treasure hunting. One year in Australia, Keith got himself very lost, or as George put it, temporarily geographically disoriented, and a search party was sent out. One Australian said a guy from Montana would know enough to get from water hole to water hole. He was right, that's where they found Keith. He became known in Australia as the "Yank that got lost in the outback." Eventually Hazel got tired of his being gone so much, and Keith ended his quests to Australia. He and Hazel then traveled more. They became snowbirds for a time, going to Arizona during the winter, where Keith continued his rock hunting. Last summer here in Glendive, Keith found a dike with agates. He began collecting them. Here is this man in his eighties with his two dogs, picking up agates. No big deal, you say. Keith picked up 4 ton of agates and piled them up. Rocks were his passion! In the bottom of a drawer of Keith's, Sandi found the following poem: "Collecting Rocks" I think that there shall never be An ignoramus just like me, Who roams the hills throughout the day, To pick up rocks that do not pay. For there's one thing I've been told I take the rocks and leave the gold. O'er deserts wild or mountains blue I search for rocks of varied hue. A hundred pounds or more I pack With blistered feet and aching back And after this is said and done I cannot name a single one. I pick up rocks where e'er I go The reason why I do not know, For rocks are found by fools like me Where God intended them to be. Keith was

82, and he was not suffering any of the ailments people his age are afflicted with. He was not taking pills for anything. His heart attack took him totally by surprise. He came from a family with longevity, he felt good, he had adventures yet to enjoy, projects unfinished, rocks to hunt, treasures to find. The heart attack was unexpected; the prognosis of imminent death difficult to believe. Keith fought hard, and could have won, if only that large percentage of his heart hadn't already died. This was one trip Keith didn't want to go on. But on July 2, 2010, Keith journeyed on. Dalice genuinely believes that her father is with his friends on another great adventure and is supremely happy. "It is not what a man acquires in his lifetime that measures his worth, but what he leaves behind." Keith Guelff has left a legacy of gifts to those who knew and loved him. He left them with respect for intelligence and for acquiring knowledge and using it. He set an example of how to make each day of life an adventure, and yet continue to dream of more. Keith went in the direction of his dreams to live the life he imagined, testing himself against his dreams. He shared his knowledge and his passions with the younger generations by word and by doing. He took what life offered him and made it his. Keith touched many lives and hearts, and those who knew him were privileged; they are proud to call him husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, friend.

Closing: 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 among family and community, and to take time to express our grief, our hope, our memories. Thank you for being here for this important time. The significance of Keith Guelff's life on this earth runs deep and will influence generations to come. He was a unique personality, who lived life large. Keith will be greatly missed. "Some people die without having really lived, while others continue to live in spite of the fact they have died." May your memories of Keith Paul Guelff be a source of comfort, inspiration, tears and laughter in the coming days." We will close Keith Guelff's life tribute with a prayer from Father Ponessa, followed by the song "Tijuana Taxi" by the Tijuana Brass, from an album Keith loved, titled "Going Places." You can be sure Keith's

adventuresome spirit is still “going places.” Closing Prayer: Father Ponessa  
Song: “Tijuana Taxi”

# Tribute Wall



“ *Keith P. Guelff*

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