



## Orville F. "Hinnie" Roberts

March 27, 1921 - December 27, 2008

GLENDIVE MONTANA: Orville "Hinnie" Franklin Roberts, age 87, passed away with his wife of 57 years at his side on Saturday, December 20, 2008, at the Glendive Medical Center Extended Care in Glendive, Montana. A celebration of Hinnie's life will be held at 2:00 P.M. on Saturday, December 27, 2008 in the Chapel of the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive, with Celebrant Sandy Silha officiating. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive has been entrusted with arrangements. Hinnie was born on March 27, 1921 the son of John W. Sr. and Kathryn (Berger) Roberts in Glendive. He attended Washington Elementary School and graduated from Dawson County High School in Glendive with the class of 1940. Hinnie married Verna Finkbiner on April 8, 1951 in Glendive. He worked on the Northern Pacific Railroad as a fireman. In 1959 he was later promoted to an Engineer and worked at that capacity until his retirement in 1982. Hinnie then drove school bus from 1982 to 1994. He dearly loved all the children that rode on his school bus. Hinnie was a life time member of the B.P.O. Elks #1324, serving as the Exalted Ruler from 1987-1988, he was also a member of the Moose Club and Noon Lions. Hinnie was in the United Transportation Union # 486 and served as treasurer for 28 years. Hinnie's big love was their cabin that they built with the help of friends at Rock Creek on Fort Peck Lake. The cabin served as a great gathering place for his family. Hinnie and his family loved to boat, water ski, fish and spend time together. Hinnie was very handy in his woodworking hobby. He loved tools and had them all! Hinnie is preceded in death by his

parents. Survivors include his wife Verna of Glendive, one daughter, Doris Zinger and her husband Larry of Polson, Montana; one son, Dennis Roberts and his wife Ellen of Cedar City Utah; two brothers, Jack Roberts and his wife Geraldine of Billings, Montana, Fred Roberts and his wife Marlene of Williston, North Dakota; two sisters, Betty Miller of Glendive, Kathryn "Bridgie" Miller of Vancouver, Washington; three grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews. Remembrances and Condolences may be shared with the family at [www.silvernalesilhafuneralhome.com](http://www.silvernalesilhafuneralhome.com) Orville "Hinnie" Franklin Roberts Life Tribute Service Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home Chapel December 27, 2008 Welcome: Master of Ceremonies Eulogy: Life Tribute Professional "The best portion of a good man's life is his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love." (William Wordsworth) Good afternoon. Today we remember and honor Orville "Hinnie" Franklin Roberts; a good man. Orville named himself "Hinnie" as a child learning to speak, and he wore that name proudly throughout his life, even wearing it on his license plates and his pick-up's front grill bug screen. Hinnie's wife, Verna, dated Hinnie for three months before she found out his real name was Orville. Orville has always been "Hinnie" to all who knew him. Hinnie was born, raised and educated in Glendive. He was a bit older than average when he graduated, because as a youngster he had rheumatic fever which caused him to miss a lot of school. Hinnie's sister, Betty Miller, remembers when Hinnie had rheumatic fever. Hinnie would lie in his bed and if any of his brothers or sisters started to come into the bedroom, Hinnie would yell for Mom! He certainly didn't want them visiting him. Upon his graduation, Hinnie tried to join the armed forces. He traveled to Butte, Montana for a physical, but was sent home for having flat feet. Hinnie got a job with the Northern Pacific Railroad. Jobs with the railroad were held in high regard in the community and Hinnie took great pride in working there. He began in maintenance, and then became a fireman, eventually being promoted to engineer. Hinnie was a very conscientious and hard worker. He always worked, even during layoffs, which sometimes meant getting an apartment in Dickinson and being on a different

run. When Hinnie first started with the railroad, he worked on the steam engines. During the winter he often came home soaked and cold from the steam. He was for the most part, a fireman on these engines, but he did have the experience of engineering the last steam engine from Dickinson to Glendive, where the engine was retired. When the railroad would get out the commemorative steam engines, Hinnie could be found on board. For many years after his retirement, Hinnie would help out on the yearly kid's ride that the railroad would put on for the younger kids. He loved that run! It was when Hinnie worked maintenance for the railroad that he and Verna first connected. Hinnie was injured on the job and went to the old NP hospital for some medical attention. Verna was working there and she remembers all the girls being abuzz about "Hinnie Roberts" being there for treatment. Hinnie was well known by the young people in town for his yellow convertible with the black top. Shortly after that, Verna and several of her co-workers walked across Glendive to go rollerskating at Kreklow's barn. Hinnie was there, also with friends, and they all skated together. Verna remembers what a beautiful skater Hinnie was. Afterwards, Hinnie gave the girls rides in his convertible back to their apartments in the basement of the hospital. He asked Verna out and they began dating, going out for several months. Verna decided to go to college and when she left, both dated others. After Verna returned from college, Hinnie made a point of talking to her and they again began dating. Eventually, they became engaged, much to Verna's mother's dismay. Her mother did not approve of the age difference between them. Hinnie was ten years older than Verna. After Hinnie turned 30 in March of 1951, he and Verna were married in April. Hinnie had always said he would not marry before he was 30. As for Verna's mother, she and Hinnie had a very close relationship of mutual love and respect. Verna and Hinnie were married for over 57 years, raising two children, Doris and Dennis. After his retirement from the railroad, Hinnie began driving school bus. He thoroughly enjoyed and loved the kids that rode on his bus, especially the younger ones. It always upset Hinnie if he had to

call a parent over a discipline issue. And Hinnie was reprimanded several times because when the weather was bad, if adults weren't at the bus stop, he would break the rules and drive the little ones to their door and make sure someone was home. Once, when the weather was snowy, he came out of a yard and slid off the road. Hinnie called home for his family to help him get out rather than calling the school, knowing he would get into trouble for delivering kids to the door. Hinnie spent his spare time building and woodworking, or at the cabin at the lake. Hinnie began home remodels when he and Verna were first married, and she was pregnant with Doris. Hinnie was pretty much self taught or learned by trial and error. He did enjoy taking the Monday night woodworking classes Dean Myers had. As much as he enjoyed the woodworking, he also enjoyed helping the newcomers to the class and going for coffee after the class. Hinnie became very proficient with his tools and the wood. He built a home for he and his family, and he also built their cabin on Rock Creek at Fort Peck Lake. He was very adept at repairing antiques. Hinnie and his friend and neighbor, Vern Schneider, spent much time in the Hinnie's shop repairing and refinishing antiques. Hinnie also began building furniture. His favorite wood was oak. One of granddaughter Trina's favorite memories is of Grandpa Hinnie letting her and cousin John work in the shop. Hinnie would give them wood, nails and hammers, letting them build right along with him. When grandson, John, was doing an entomology project for 4-H, Hinnie and John built a case with glass to display the bugs. For each of his grandchildren's eighth grade graduation, Hinnie built cedar lined oak chests. Granddaughter Christina's cedar chest has traveled the world with her, including Korea and Japan. Granddaughter Trina received a blanket chest built like a deacon's bench. Her legacy sits in her kitchen today, and at the bottom of it is the paper her Grandpa Hinnie filled out when he entered it in the Dawson County Fair. (And by the way, Hinnie always won with his fair entries.) Grandson John's chest was designed as a humpback trunk which locked. Daughter Doris tells of a three-sided glass curio cabinet her father built which she desperately wanted. But Hinnie told her it was being built for

Verna. Hinnie finished it and in the fall when Doris visited home, there it was, in the house filled with Verna's things. At Christmas, Hinnie and Verna traveled to Doris' home. Hinnie had wrapped up a brick with a picture of the curio cabinet taped to it, and gave this to Doris to open as her gift. When it came time for Doris to open the gift, Doris remarked, a bit sarcastically, that obviously, that wrapped gift was not the curio cabinet. When Doris saw the picture, she was humbled. The curio cabinet was out in the back of Hinnie's pick-up, covered with a blanket. This cabinet is, of course, very special to Doris, as are the memories that go with it. If woodworking was Hinnies' passion, tools were his weakness. Verna tells of going shopping in Billings. She would go to the mall and Hinnie would shop Sears. He liked Craftsman tools. And he has them all! Verna swears every time he shopped, he would buy another set of screwdrivers. Many sets are still in the plastic packages. Doris calls her father a packrat, and says at the lake, if the neighbors needed anything they would just come on over to "Hinnie's Hardware" to borrow whatever they needed. Right up there at the top of Hinnie's list of favorites, was the cabin at the lake. Hinnie was working a second job at Milne Implement when a boat came in and he bought it. The family started camping with a tent at Fort Peck to go boating and skiing; that evolved to a pick-up camper, and then a bigger camper. Lots became available on Rock Creek, and Hinnie thought it would be a good idea to look at them. He and Verna got a lot and Hinnie built their cabin, adding on over the years. All the family has many wonderful memories of boating, skiing, and enjoying the lake and cabin over many summers. Hinnie was a wonderful skier, and would teach all the kids who wanted to learn, how to ski. Then he would show them how it was really done. Verna liked driving the boat, as did Trina. But Hinnie loved skiing, and he was good at showing off his talents on one ski. He would wear a red fedora hat and cut up the water. Verna recalls a few memorable dumps, one in the mud; but for the most part, Hinnie could do almost anything on skis. And he skied well into his seventies. When Hinnie wasn't on the water at the lake, he would walk the circle of cabins near his cabin and visit with everyone, or he

could be found grilling steaks for the family. He and Verna always hoped to spend an entire summer at the cabin, but that dream never became a reality. Much time was spent at the cabin, and many wonderful memories were made there. Hinnie was a guy who never liked a fuss. If asked something, his first response was no, but then he would go and take care of it for you. His temper flared hot and subsided quickly, and Doris remembers only one spanking as she was growing up. Doris says that even when Hinnie knew she was coming to visit, he would always say in apparent surprise, "What are you doing here?" Hinnie was very social, and enjoyed visiting with people of all ages.

Granddaughter Christina's favorite memory was of going to coffee at Hardee's with her Grandpa. Grandpa Hinnie would order her one of their huge ice cream cones, he would have coffee, and they would visit with his friends.

Hinnie touched many with his personable ways, and performed many kindnesses for others. He was a good provider and kept his mind and his hands busy all throughout his life. Hinnie did not belong to a particular church, but he did have faith in God. And he enjoyed the old time hymns, two of which you will hear today. Yes, Hinnie Roberts was a good man. He lived and worked in the Glendive community his whole life. His family always came first, but he contributed much to the community through his jobs and through his work in the organizations he belonged to. He will be remembered and missed by many. Let us now listen to a favorite song of Hinnie's, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus". Song: What a Friend We Have in Jesus" Life Tribute

Professional: In a few moments, anyone who would like to share a memory or thoughts about Hinnie can step up to the microphone here at the front. But first I have the honor of reading a couple of e-mails. Verna's sister and her husband, Linda and Steve Baxter, sincerely regret not being able to be here today to share these thoughts in person. But their hearts and thoughts are with you, Verna. Linda writes: "Going home to Glendive will not be the same again. Glendive has lost a very special person who lived his entire life in a very fine way in this Eastern Montana town. My brother-in-law, whom I

addressed as 'Orville F', was a man not to be measured by his words, (which were few and most often spoken 'gruffly'), but by the way he lived his life and the deeds he did. I don't see a train winding its way down the tracks but that I don't think of Hinnie. My first memories of him as a child were associated with the Northern Pacific Railroad and the need to be ever close to a phone so he could get the call telling him when he would next go out on his run to Forsyth. How he loved the railroad and all that pertained to it! I learned to water ski because of Hinnie's persistence and extreme patience. There was never a more challenging learner when it came to water skiing than me. Whether we were at the reservoirs in Lindsay, Beach, North Dakota, and finally Fort Peck, he would drive the boat, try to pull me gently out of the water, watch me fall over, circle around and start the whole process over, picking up the ski or skis that had fallen off on the way, back to me. I don't think he ever complained, and when I did finally succeed in getting up, staying up and even learning to ski outside of the 'wake', my success was also his! Thank you Hinnie for 'hanging in there' until I finally got it right! As I type these thoughts of my brother-in-law, I am sitting at a library table that he purchased (probably at an auction) and refinished and we hauled back to Moscow in our truck. I feel close to him today as I sit here and I don't want to 'ramble on' but I do want to continue with just a few more of my most vivid memories that I want to share. Fort Peck and the cabin have been part of so many, many years of spending a couple of weeks in Montana with Verna and Hinnie. No one loved that place more than Hinnie and he loved to have family visit. Our son, Justin, loved to go 'to the lake' every summer and spend time. He learned to water ski there (luckily he inherited his father's genes in learning quickly and not mine). Justin and Steve would spend hours hiking in and exploring the badlands and Hinnie would always query upon their return, 'Well, what did you find this time?'. Justin loved his Uncle Hinnie and Aunt Verna and has always wished his children could have had the experiences at the cabin on Fort Peck that he enjoyed. One of our favorite and special treats at the cabin was the night we would have steaks. That would usually happen on the last or next to last

evening there and I have great memories of Hinnie at the barbeque doing the grilling and then sitting down with that grin on his face and 'digging in'. Hinnie had a heart as big as Montana and even though he portrayed a certain gruffness to those around him, inside he was 'an old softy'. He hated goodbyes and would have loved to ignore them and walk away but we never let him get off that easy. He accepted our hugs, gingerly at first, but over the years I think he came to expect them and actually looked forward to them. He was not demonstrative physically, but more than a few times would turn away so that we wouldn't see the tears welling up in his eyes. I love you, Hinnie. I am giving you one final, big hug with a big smooch on your forehead to go with it! I know you loved us all...you will be missed but never forgotten. Thank you for the memories..."

Linda Brother-in-law Steve writes this: "It's hard to know where to start when going back to my memories of Hinnie. I remember our first meeting over Thanksgiving 1976, at our soon to be in-common sister in law's home in Livingston. I have to say I left with the one word that would best describe my first impression of Hinnie...'GRUFF'. I soon found out that was just the exterior. That next summer found us invited to Verna and Hinnie's cabin at Fort Peck, probably Hinnie's favorite place in the world. This would become the first of many great vacations with Hinnie and Verna. That summer Hinnie taught me how to water ski. I also learned Hinnie was very patient. He probably wondered if it was worth the effort trying to get me out of the water, but he persisted until I was finally up on skis. Over the next 20+ years I don't believe we missed a summer at the lake with our son growing up and enjoying Hinnie as much as we did. During those years I learned more about Hinnie. He was probably the smoothest water skier I have seen. Even in his 70's he made me look like a beginner. Hinnie was generous, loved family and at some point in those early years, I believe we bonded and truly became friends. How did I know this? For the first time, he asked me to drive the boat so he could ski. Before that, Verna was the only one allowed to pull Hinnie. After that we spent many days dragging each other around the lake. Hinnie also had a sense of humor. After a day of hiking the badlands and snake hunting with my

son, we arrived at the cabin with an aquarium of rattlesnakes. He said to set it on the table on the deck so Verna could see them. Not a good idea I soon found out, but we got many a laugh over that...when Verna wasn't around. Yes Verna, it was Hinnie's idea. I also got to work with Hinnie on some cabin project every summer. We painted, roofed, enclosed the deck, worked on the boat. I found him to be a talented carpenter, mechanic, and woodworker. He loved to tinker around in his shop at the lake and at home. I always enjoyed that time with him and I learned a thing or two as a bonus. There are many memories I have of Hinnie, from the exciting things we did to the simplest. We spent many an afternoon on the cabin deck watching those Montana thunderstorms as well as on the porch of his home talking, reading and just watching cars go by. But I am going to close with this. Hinnie loved family. He really truly hated goodbyes. Not only because it was the end of our time together, but because he knew the HUG was coming! Whenever we left, I gave Hinnie a hug. At first he seemed stunned and would turn red. But over the years, hug by hug, that gruff exterior disappeared at the goodbyes and he even surprised me when he started hugging back. I will truly miss my brother in law. Goodbye friend. Thanks for the memories"...Steve The mike will now be open for any here who wishes to share. At this time, Hinnie's daughter, Doris Zinger, will share a poem with us. Closing: Life Tribute Professional A man's legacy is measured by the gifts he leaves behind. Hinnie's legacy can be seen in the many beautiful pieces of woodworking he made and created. But his legacy is also felt in the hearts of family and friends. It is the lessons he taught family and friends in having a good work ethic; being dedicated to the care of children, his own and those of the community; enjoying life; loving and caring for family. Hinnie Roberts was an important man, a good man, who touched many lives during the past 87 years. Hinnie has provided many memories to hold close to the heart. "To live in hearts that love, is not to die." Orville "Hinnie" Roberts will be greatly missed. Let us close Hinnie's Life Tribute Service with a prayer from a family friend, Pastor Dan Pust, followed

by a hymn selected by Hinnie's wife, Verna, "Precious Lord Take My Hand."

# Tribute Wall



“ Orville F. "Hinnie" Roberts

---

December 07, 2022 at 04:10 PM