



Pete Unruh

June 19, 1923 - October 22, 2007

Pete Unruh, age 84, of Glendive, passed away on Wednesday, October 17, 2007 at his home in Glendive. A Life Tribute Service will be held at 10:00 A.M., Monday, October 22, 2007 at the Chapel of the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home in Glendive with Celebrant Sandy Silha officiating. A private family interment will be held at a later date at Dawson Memorial Cemetery in Glendive. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive is entrusted with arrangements. Pete was born on June 19, 1923 at the family homestead, located eight miles east of Richey, Montana, the son of Andrew and Minerva (Dirks) Unruh. He attended a country school but was frequently kept home to help with the farm. He married Marjorie Buller on May 16, 1945 and they were married for 31 years when they divorced. Pete was united in marriage to Sharon Christiansen on January 6, 1979 in Glendive. Pete and his wife made their home in Glendive where Pete had worked on a telephone line crew, did farming, road construction, oilfield work and had his own business before he retired in 1984. Pete loved horses and would talk often about his wild rodeo days. His other love was music and he could play at least one song on several instruments including the harmonica, guitar, accordion, organ and piano. He would tell stories of staying up all night playing for wedding dances back when the entire families would come to have a good time. He was preceded in death by his parents; four children, Rickie, Rodney, Rex and Roane; a stepson, Brian Egeness, six sisters, Lena Baker, Bertha Fachner, Carrie Holloway, Delph Shanley, Kate Trotter and Mary Ann Carson; five brothers,

Jake, John, Ben, Dave and Leonard; one great grandchild, Dani Bennett. Survivors include his wife, Sharon, of Glendive; two daughters, Roanna Skogas of Fairview, Montana and Rhonda Unruh Kendra of Glendive; two sons, Russell Unruh of Fairview and Randy Unruh and his wife Cheryl of Glendive; stepdaughter, Pamela Egeness of Phoenix, Arizona; two sisters, Eva Stone of Wolf Point, Montana and Billie DeWar of Ontario; in-laws, Ole Unruh of Wolf Point, Viola Unruh of Billings, Jackie Unruh of Missoula and Bill Trotter; grandchildren, Jami Ruff, Brad Skogas, J.W. Skogas, Tony Monson, Stacy Unruh, Erin Unruh, Tyler Unruh, P.J. Unruh, Cari Unruh, Joey Unruh, John Bennett, Brad Egeness, Jami Egeness, Sara Egeness, Tara Egeness, Jo Egeness and Junessa Egeness; many great grandchildren. Celebrant service: It's only appropriate that we begin Pete Unruh's life tribute service with music that was special to him, music that was an integral part of his whole life, music that Pete played and sang many times over the course of his life. The song "Silver Wings" is a song Pete's sons, Russell and Randy, remember him singing often. Music was a big part of Pete's life from an early age. As a youngster on the homestead, the family would often gather around the piano to sing and harmonize. Pete never had any formal music education or training, but he learned to play many instruments, including harmonica, accordion, piano, organ, and anything with strings - guitars, mandolin, banjo- Pete could play them all. Pete could not read a note of music, but would play by ear after just hearing a tune a once or twice. Pete shared his love of music with his family, not only by playing and singing, but by teaching them to play. His son Randy still plays and is active in a band . The following was written by members of Pete's family. "Pete the music man: Pete has always made music since he was a youngster. When he married Sharon, he found out she came from family who also made music. Pete's new father-in-law, Ejnar, played violin. Pete played the guitar. When they got together, it was like Ejnar and Pete were 'dueling banjos'." According to Sharon, on week-ends, the house was full of friends having jam sessions of music. And there were many all night wedding dances that Pete and his group or band would play for. Pete

was always in a group or band of musicians. Playing music was Pete's passion. Sometimes Sharon, would join in the fun and sing, but only when Pete would harmonize, because Sharon says, he made her sound good. That cassette tape of Pete's music also has Sharon doing some of the vocals. Sharon would also play the keyboard and bass guitar, whatever was needed. When television came on the scene in the 1950's, the station in Williston, North Dakota had a half hour talent show they aired. Pete and friend and fellow musician, Bob Sovereign, would perform western and gospel music on TV. Pete's family would gather around the nearest television to watch. He also performed on the Glendive station, and Randy can remember being a participant with his father, at age seven, standing on crutches, singing for the first time in public on television, as Pete played. Son, Russell recalls Pete building and crafting a unique guitar to play. Pete went around to all the neighbors gathering special wood for the instrument. He had some oak and mahogany, and this guitar had such a special sound that Pete named it the "Tattletale" because if he made a mistake you could hear it immediately from the sound the guitar made. The guitar told on you. Regrettably, that guitar is no longer in the family. Pete was quite a storyteller, and had many stories to tell about playing all night at weddings and social events. He enjoyed watching people as he played his music, and he was from an era when these gatherings were family events that everyone in the area attended. But Pete did not spend all his time at music. Pete's work ethic was developed at an early age. Growing up on a farm, Pete was expected to do many chores and help with the farm work, before time could be spent with music or even school. Russell and Randy say they too, were raised much that way...after school, they came home to work and were expected to get things done. Pete did not do much disciplining, as everyone was busy with chores. Russell and Randy do tell one story about getting into trouble with their father. It is a skunk in the henhouse story. Pete had to run an errand, and told Russell, Randy, and their brother Rick to have the skunk that was under the

chicken coop gone by the time he got back. Russell's job was to shoot the skunk when he ran out from under the shed as Randy and Rick beat on the sides of the shed to scare the skunk out. By the time the skunk came lumbering out, there wasn't much left standing of that chicken coop, and when Russell shot at the skunk, he hit what was left of the shed and it came down too. When Pete came home there was no skunk, and there was no chicken coop and Pete was not happy with his boys. As an adult, Pete worked hard at many jobs besides farming, and had many experiences and stories to tell. One Pete would tell about was when he worked on roads, and did snow removal. He and a fellow worker were doing snow removal after a snowstorm, using a grader and a V-plow, and were going to plow out the road to a county school. A huge snowdrift had blown in between the school and the road. The teacher of the school was standing on top of the drift taking pictures of Pete and the other plow operator opening the road. When the plows hit the drift, snow went flying and hit the teacher, knocking him over, and rolling him down the other side of the drift to the school building. Everyone was a bit shook up over that. Sharon reports that even though he wasn't supposed to, when Pete plowed snow for the county, he would plow out the farmers' private roads, too, so they could get out. Another snow story occurred when Pete has his own oilfield business. Pete called it P & S Oilfield Service, the "P & S" stood for Pete and Sharon, and it included two steamer trucks that Pete would service oil rigs with. On a snowy, wintry day, Pete went out with a fairly new employee, his step-daughter, Pam, whom he let drive. They ended up following a plow that was pushing a great deal of snow to the side of the road. Just as Pete suggested that maybe Pam was a bit too far to the left, the truck hit snow that had no road under it and turned on its side. There was Pete, lying against the passenger door with Pam pinning him down. Pete's head was bleeding, and his hearing aid had went out the partially opened side window and was lying in the snow. Pam, besides being scared from the rollover, was frantic about seeing blood on Pete's head. Pete couldn't hear a word she said, and he was yelling at her. Finally, Pam understood him to

say, that he couldn't get out until she did. Pam exited the driver's door, with Pete right behind her. As he got out and stood up, he commented that something didn't seem quite right. Pam scrambled back into the truck to retrieve the hearing aid, not daring to mention the blood. Pete, meanwhile, got on the CB to call for a truck with a winch to get them upright again. This took most of the day and when they got back home, it was turning dark. Pete told Pam to go in the house, as he was going to look over the damage on the steamer truck. Pete was out there quite a while. Pam was sure she was going to get yelled at and fired. When Pete came in, he downplayed the damage, and Pam was not fired. The damage was over \$10,000 dollars. Prior to starting P& S Oilfield Service, Pete worked for D & H Oilfield Service. The interesting thing was that Pete worked on that job with his sons. Something else that Pete seemed to always be doing and was good at, was mechanics. There is some dispute as to whether Pete loved doing it or did it because he needed to do it. No matter what Pete did to earn a living, at heart he was a cowboy. His standard style of dress was jeans, a western shirt, belt with a silver buckle, and always, boots. When he played his music or went out, he would wear the fancy western shirts. The family wrote up this story about Pete. "A real, live cowboy! When Sharon and Pete moved to Phoenix, there was a family gathering to welcome them. As requested by their mother, Marilyn, nephews, Landon, age 10, and Cameron, age 8, went over to introduce themselves to their new uncle. Cameron asked Pete, "Are you a real cowboy?" Pete began to tell them about his rodeo days. After a lengthy visit, the boys returned to their mother. "Mom! Pete is a real live cowboy. He rode bucking broncos, roped steers, did barrel racing, and even bull riding! He is SOOOOOO cool!". "Yes, Pete loved horses and spent a lot of time riding and participating at area rodeos. Pete had a horse that was famous in the local rodeo circuit. The horse's name was Red Devil and no one could ride him. Except Pete that is. Pete would take him to the Richey rodeo and let all the cowboys give Red Devil a try, and all would end up in the dirt. At the end of the rodeo, Pete would lead Red Devil to the center of the arena, mount

up, and ride out. No one but Pete ever rode Red Devil. Russell tells the story of how Pete came to break that horse to ride. When Pete first got Red Devil, Pete would get bucked off every time he would try to ride the horse. But Pete was determined. There was a summer fallow field near the barn. After a heavy rainstorm, Pete saddled up Red Devil and led him out to the middle of the now muddy field. Up Pete went on Red Devil. Red Devil proceeded to begin bucking, but it was a tough go in all the deep mud. Pete and Red Devil went down in the mud several times, as Red Devil worked to rid himself of Pete. But Pete stuck, and wore that horse out. Red Devil never tried to buck Pete off again. Another favorite animal of Pete's was Duke. Thirteen years ago, Pete stopped by Randy and Cheryl's. Cheryl invited him in for coffee and Pete came in and sat down but did not unbutton his coat. Cheryl could hear this faint whining and finally she asked Pete if he had something in his coat. Pete reached in and pulled out a little fluff ball that fit in the palm of his hand, and said "This is Duke". As he showed her his tiny new puppy, Cheryl observed that the name Duke was bigger than the pup itself. Pete was also a fisherman. Mostly, he fished the river. Pete's fishing philosophy was to catch and fry or he would smoke it, to be enjoyed later. Along with liking to fish, there are course, fishing stories. Pam tells of Pete taking her husband, John, fishing. Now John is a catch and release fisherman. So the first time John catches a fish, John takes it off the hook, shows it to Pete and releases it. Pete, much to John's surprise, begins yelling, "What are you doing, you just let supper go!" It was probably good that John was just visiting and not a regular fishing buddy of Pete's. Randy remembers an afternoon of fishing with his father. They loaded up the poles and gear and filled the cooler with beer. Pete and Randy found a good spot on the riverbank and settled in for a relaxing afternoon of fishing, beer and conversation. As the beer disappears, Randy puts his empties back in the cooler, but Pete just leaves his on the ground. As it becomes time to leave, Pete and Randy gather up the equipment, but Pete leaves the cans lay. This bothers Randy, so he says something to Pete about

being a litterbug. Pete picks up all his empties, and throws them into the weeds where they can't be seen. Randy just shakes his head. This next fishing story comes from Pete's brother-in-law, Al Linde. These are Al's words: The next story that the family tells they titled "Gutting a Fish." "Family members, Marilyn, Al, Cameron, Sharon, Pete, Jo, Jamie, Jean, Kathy and Roger were all hanging out at the fishing hole of the Flying X Ranch. Granddaughter Jo, 10 years old, and nephew, Cameron, 8 years old, hit it off and decided to go to the pond and fish by themselves. They came back a little later with six fish and were chatting about how good these fish were going to taste at dinner. After getting back to the trailer, Pete said, 'whoever caught the fish must gut the fish. After much discussion, the kids were astonished about what that meant. Jo and Cameron decided there would be no 'gutting of the fishes.' Pete took both kids over to the table and taught them how to gut a fish. The kids immediately became ardent 'catch and release' fishermen only! To put their new idea into practice, the next day, the kids went fishing. They reportedly caught 30 fish! However, they managed to get them off the hook by themselves and back into the water so they wouldn't have to 'gut the fish'!" The next memory is not a fish story, but is something much more important. The following was written by Pete's step-daughter, Pam. (My Step-Dad by Pamela Egeness.) "I remember I was about 15 years old. I was digging potatoes out of our garden. Pete crouched down by me and said, 'What would you think about me being your step-dad?' I said, 'That would be okay. I know you and Mom have a lot of fun together.' He said, 'Well, I'm glad to hear that because I'm going to ask her to marry me.' It meant a lot to me that he cared enough about me to ask for my acceptance of him into our life. Pete always had a garden. One year he asked what kind of vegetable I liked. I said, 'It's not a vegetable, it's strawberries.' Pete grew a strawberry patch just for me. Little did I know what he was really doing was teaching me the importance of "chores". I weeded the patch, I helped Pete put netting to keep the birds out and Oh, Yes, I even helped harvesting those delicious berries. Then I graduated to pulling

dandelions out of Pete's meticulously manicured lawn. Pete observed me pulling the blossom and top leaves off. I thought I was doing an okay job. Pete comes out the door as he had been watching me from the arcadia door way. He says, 'You gotta go deep! Git them roots!' I thought, roots, well heck, maybe I need a shovel. Pete was horrified as I came out of the garage with a shovel. Needless to say, he relieved me from my chores that day. Within a week, Pete had bought the coolest dandelion puller, that gets the roots and all, without leaving holes. It made my chore so easy. My step dad had a way of making all chores fun. Pete was very good to us. He made my mom very happy and in turn, that me feel safe and secure. I love my step dad as a real father. I was lucky enough to have had the chance to tell Pete many times how much he meant to me." Pete really was an avid gardener. Russell commented that Pete would stand and just watch his garden grow and if a weed sprouted up, Pete would pounce on it pulling it out immediately. As Pam mentioned in her story, she became the chief dandelion puller, but Pete would not let her throw the dandelions away because he and Sharon would cut off the blossoms to use for dandelion wine. Pete was quite the wine maker. Dandelion wine, chokecherry wine, carrot wine, gallons of it. And Pete's wine had a potency, just a little would knock you for a loop. Pete had given some chokecherry wine to a fellow in Wibaux. When it was gone, he came asking Pete if he could get more. It seemed the guy's wife would have a short glass before bed each night because it made her sleep so well. Randy and his wife Cheryl, did not think the wine tasted very good, but then you didn't need much to get the effect of it. Russell had saved some carrot wine for twenty-five years and then tried it. Russell said it was like drinking kool-aid, but still just as potent. Sharon, would help gather chokecherries and dandelions for Pete to make the wine, but was not a drinker herself. Pete loved to serve his wine to guests and to give jugs of it away to friends. There is one more story that the family wrote up to share. It is called " Pete's first scavenger hunt." Pete and Sharon came to Phoenix in October, 1981. Brother-in-law Wayne and his wife, Karen, were having a Halloween party. One of the evening's

entertainments was a scavenger hunt. Brother-in-law John, who met Pete at the party, was assigned as Pete's partner and the two of them set off to find the items on their list (artificial grapes, a boiled egg, and other oddities). At one house, two couples were playing cards. The couples answered the door and learned of the hunt. They promptly set about to obtain as many items on the list as they could. A little farther down the block, John rang the doorbell of another friendly homeowner who invited Pete and John in, offered them a beer, and invited them to sit at the table while the egg boiled in the microwave. John and Pete had a very nice visit with this friendly 'neighbor'. After leaving, Pete asked John, 'How long have you known those people?' John said, 'Well, hell, I just met them, same as you did!' Pete was amazed and replied, 'If we were in Glendive, they would have shot us!' We've mentioned Pete's love of music, horses, fishing and gardening but Pete had a few other favorites. Coffee, beer, Louis L'Amour books, which Sharon says many of which they have more than one copy of, because Pete would forget which ones he had read and buy and read them again. Pete enjoyed woodworking in his later years, making clocks and tables from cedar. And people. Pete liked people. He drew others to him with his music and storytelling. He was always smiling, and he was very confident of himself and very proud of who he was. Pete led a busy and full life these past 84 years. Pete Unruh touched many lives and was a presence in the lives of his family and friends. Pete Unruh will be missed. Let us now listen to the song, "I'll Fly Away", as we remember Pete. Song: "I'll Fly Away" It is an important day when we stop to bear witness to a person's life and times among us, to remember him, to tell his story. Thank you for being here for this important time. We have shared a few of the stories that were a part of the life of Pete Unruh. There are many more to be shared. It is the hope of the family that you will continue to share the stories, the special times, and significance of Pete's touch on your life. In his later years, Pete was not the Pete that you once knew. He suffered from Alzheimer's and his hearing was almost gone.

Sharon cared for him and honored the Pete she had known and loved until his death just days ago, from congestive heart failure. Today we honor and recognize Pete and the life he had. We mourn his death. No one goes through life without suffering loss. Pete knew much about loss. Pete lost four sons to accidents. He knew there are no words that can take away the pain of loss. Pete's approach to others suffering was to open his arms wide and fully embrace you. Perhaps we can take our example from Pete and offer hugs today to those who grieve the loss of Pete. "A man's legacy is measured by the gifts he leaves behind." Each of you were a special part of Pete's life. Perhaps you find his gift to you in his music, his smile, his energy, the memory of a special moment, time or experience. Is the gift Pete left you, something learned from Pete or by his example? Perhaps his gift is found in your relationship with Pete, or simply from his friendship. Whatever Pete's gift to you is, treasure it, for it is a part of you. Remember Pete, "for to live in hearts that love is not to die." As we conclude this life tribute service for Pete Unruh, we will again hear Pete's music. Let us keep it and Pete in our hearts. For those unable to be here today, the text of today's service can be read on the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home website. You are all reminded that the Pete's family invites you to come next door to the tribute center for food, fellowship and stories. Thank you again for sharing this important time. In memory of Pete From Al Linde, Brother in law Pete and I met at a Family gathering about 8 years ago. In spite of about 20 years age difference; He and I quickly bonded and developed a deep friendship instantly. From that time on; he and I always enjoyed each other's company during our family gatherings. My most fond memory of our experiences together was during one family reunion in Wyoming. He and I were able to fish one of the trout lakes up on the Flying X Ranch; where our brother-in-law Roger Barnes has a membership. Now trout are a delicate fish and purist fisherman use specialized equipment when going after them. One of our good buddies up on the Ranch, Dale, uses his fly fishing equipment and delicately tied flies. I and Roger would use ultra light spinning rods and reels and miniature lures. But

Pete - He brought the same fishing rig he used for going after paddle fish that can weigh 20 times more than a trout! He had this huge heavy action rod you could land a shark with. His reel was spooled with what I think was 25 pound test line on it. It looked like small rope. Roger and I watched him as he cast out his line. Pete must have had a sinker on the end of that line that weighed a pound. It was as big as a golf ball, only made of solid lead! Pete probably made it himself. When that sinker hit the water it made a splash and sound like a bowling ball had just been thrown in! Roger and I just looked at each other thinking the fish would never come back around after that. Roger and I figured Pete would catch a trout - by concussion! But Ole' Pete was fishing! Pete's way! The fish did come back and Pete did catch a trout that day; confident it would never break the line! It ended up a great fishing trip. We pulled several huge trout out of the lake, celebrating with a beer or two, and memorializing the event with pictures. I held the fish up and Ole' Pete held up his large hunting knife, in mock victory. I was fortunate enough to have several fishing trips with my buddy, Pete. The only draw back, in later years, was his loss of hearing making it hard for us just to talk. That didn't stop us from being fishin' buds. I feel unfortunate that I didn't know Pete sooner so that we could have had longer together. I would have loved to have been able to talk more and hear more of the many stories of his life. However; I am thankful to have had the time we had - as two "instant best buddies."

Tribute Wall



“ *Pete Unruh*

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