



## Richard Mittlestadt

April 16, 1926 - February 24, 2010

Glendive, Montana: Richard Mittlestadt, 83, passed away on Friday, February 19, 2010 at his home in Glendive, surrounded by his loving family. A Life Tribute Service will be held at 10:00 A.M. on Wednesday, February 24, 2010 in the Chapel of the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive with Celebrant Sandy Silha and Reverend James Hageman officiating. Interment will follow at the Dawson County Cemetery in Glendive. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive has been entrusted with the arrangements. Richard was born on April 16, 1926 in Dunn Center, North Dakota, the son of Edward and Elizabeth (Diefel) Mittlestadt. He received his education in Dunn Center and Fairview North Dakota. His family lived on a farm on Cracker Box Route near Glendive. Richard met the love of his life Helen Buxbaum and six short weeks later they were married on January 5, 1952 in Sidney, Montana. They started their married life in Glendive, then moved to Savage. It didn't take long for Richard and Helen to decide that Glendive was their home. During this union four children were born, Donnie, Cindy, Glenna and Steven. Richard was employed by Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Glendive as a truck driver for 38 years. He retired in 1986. During his employment with Coca-Cola, Richard also worked evenings at the Phillip's 66 Station for his best friend Bill Frank and also at the Chevron Station in Glendive. He was an accomplished mechanic and an all around handyman. Following his retirement from truck driving Richard enjoyed gardening and loved to help his daughter, Cindy, with her catering business. Richard's hobbies included woodworking. He built

many wooden windmills. These special windmills can be found all across the United States. He loved to watch his grandchildren's sporting events. He attended all events until his health would no longer allow it. Richard was a much loved husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather, brother and uncle. Richard will be greatly missed. Richard was preceded in death by his parents, three sisters, Olga, Frieda and Irene; three brothers, Ernest, Walter and Alvin and a niece, Debbie. Survivors include his wife of 58 years, Helen of Glendive, two sons, Donnie (Kelly) Mittlestadt of Shepherd, Montana and Steven (Angela) Mittlestadt of Glendive; two daughters, Cindy (Duane) Cudmore of Glendive and Glenna (Tony) Lee of Billings, Montana; 13 Grandchildren, Colby (Dee), Tara (Ross), Tami (Blake), Serena (Cody)00, Tyler, Shae, Bobbie (Wesley), Mikayla, Jeremy, Milaka, Allie, Dillon, Amanda and Dallas; 7 Great Grandchildren; Chad, Carson, Kailee, Dalton, Buckingham, Sasha and Angelina; a brother, Donald (Leona) Mittlestadt of Missoula, Montana; a sister-in-law, Edna Mittlestadt of Glendive; a brother-in-law, Leo Reynolds of Hillsboro, Oregon; a special extended family member, Fred Lee of Glendive and numerous nieces, nephews and friends. Richard Mittlestadt Life Tribute Service February 24, 2010 Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home Chapel Glendive, Montana Welcome: Master of Ceremonies Opening Prayer: Reverend Hageman Video Tribute Eulogy: Celebrant It has been written that: "The value of a life cannot be judged by the words that pass our lips. It isn't what we say. Nor can the value be based on belief systems, accepted or rejected. It isn't what we believe. The value cannot be determined by the work we do, no matter how successful. It isn't what we do. Our value is found in the person we become. It is the "who we are" that matters. The kindness that does not need to be turned on, And just seems to be there. The honesty that happens without thought, And is the expected response. The acceptance of others without conditions, And no one is surprised. The love that loves in spite of, and through it all, And is as natural as breath. These are the true values of life." ("The Value of Life" by Doug Manning) Richard Mittlestadt had that "kindness that just seemed to be there", and the "honesty

that was expected.” Richard “accepted others without conditions”, and he “loved in spite of and through it all,” and it was as “natural as his breath.” And for Richard, the value he found in life came from his family and friends. With five generations of family always close at hand, Richard and his wife, Helen, had a wealth of love and caring over their 58 years of marriage. In late fall of 1951, Helen came into Glendive to see a dentist. She ran into an uncle of hers, who introduced her to a young man named Richard Mittlestadt. It must have been “love at first sight” because a week later, Helen got a job at the Glendive Woolworth store, moving to Glendive because of that young man. When asked what it was she liked about Richard, Helen just replies emphatically, “everything!” Six weeks later, almost to the day, she and Richard were married and they began their life journey together. During that journey, Richard and Helen raised four children, Donnie, Cindy, Glenna, and Steven, and enjoyed 14 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren. Included in that mix over the years were the parents of both Richard and Helen, brothers, sisters, in-laws, nieces, nephews, cousins, and many friends. They worked together and played together. Many memories were made going to the lake for camping, boating, skiing, and of course, Richard’s favorite, fishing. Family reunions were common. One memorable reunion that all the family was able to make was at Flathead Lake. Another reunion that was just the adults was a get-together at Richard’s sister’s in Oregon. Helen tells that everyone went to a fish market and each couple picked a different kind of fish or seafood. A big meal was prepared, so they all could try the different kinds. She and Richard had selected clams because they had never tried those before. Many memories were made on these trips and at reunions, allowing the family to remain close and stay involved and active in each other’s lives. Richard was a mild-mannered man, slow to anger, and appreciated for his sunny disposition. Any discipline given out by Richard was probably with Helen’s prodding. Donnie recalls one memorable incident when he came home after partying and woke up with quite a hangover. He could hear his parents arguing, and

then his dad got him up, sat him at the kitchen table, put a twelve pack of beer and a pack of cigarettes in front of Donnie, and told him to have at it. That was tough on Donnie, and he says he never really cared for cigarettes after that. Steven appreciates his father's attitudes a great deal. Steven is the youngest and grew up pretty much an only child being younger than his three siblings. Steven found that with the mishaps of his youth, his biggest defender was his father. It was never Steve's fault. When Steve broke the driveline on his truck "racing" around the EPEC parking lot, he called his dad for a tow. Parts were scattered around the lot but Steve, and subsequently his father, insisted that the driveline had "just broke". When Steve drove his vehicle into a building, Richard was sure the brakes had failed. Steve was always 'a star' in his father's eyes. Steve's wife, Angie, feels that Steve is the wonderful father he is because of the example set by Richard. A special time for Steve was after he graduated from high school, and he and his father took a trip out west, just the two of them, to visit Grandma Buxbaum in Spokane, Washington and some other relatives that lived out that way. The time spent together was made even better, when on the way home they came across a "Smokey and the Bandit" Trans Am car that was for sale. Richard bought the car for Steven. Steven was thrilled to drive that car home, but Richard, well, he had to explain that one to a not so thrilled Helen. A growing up memory Cindy and Glenna shared was about their chore of doing the dishes. One night after dinner they were complaining about doing the dishes and decided they needed a dishwasher. Richard gave them a choice, the family would get a dishwasher or a new television, a color television. The girls decided the color television sounded great. Richard bought the family a new television, their first color TV, and he and Helen watched it while the girls did dishes. What could they complain about, they had made the choice. Richard loved his beer, and working at the Coke plant, he always had a good supply of beer at home. First it was Great Falls beer, then Oly and Pabst. All Richard's children learned to enjoy their Oly's...they "borrowed" a lot of it from their father. Richard's family loved him for many reasons. They loved that he was not judgmental. Even when they

made bad decisions or mistakes in life, Richard was always supportive. They loved his kindnesses, his caring attitude and concerns for others, themselves included. Richard always had a finger on the pulse of the family. He never took sides, but was always there with compassion, friendship, and love. Everyone just enjoyed being with him and having him in their lives. Richard was a hard worker and he liked to keep his hands busy. An accomplished mechanic, Richard maintained, built, and rebuilt engines for the entire family. He was in charge of all the oil changes, and he and Steve spent countless hours in Steve's garage working together on vehicles. Richard was also the resident handyman, and family and friends could count on him to work on any kind of project, roofing, cement, remodeling; he helped with both granddaughter's, Tara and Tami's home remodels. Son-in-law Tony Lee says that Richard was very unhappy if he found you working on a project or fixing something without him. Richard was always available to help family and friends with most anything. He enjoyed helping Cindy with her catering business; if granddaughter Tara and her husband, Ross Oakland, needed an extra hand on their farm and ranch, they could call on Richard. He always found time to watch, care for, pick up, and support the grandkids, and great-grandkids. And he was a dependable pet sitter when needed. Richard's hobbies included woodworking, especially making windmills. And he enjoyed his garden and yard. Every year he had a beautiful garden. He raised many kinds of vegetables, his favorite being tomatoes. His yard was always mowed and neat in the summer, and in the winter, he kept the sidewalks and parking areas clean of snow. Richard, himself, was a very clean-cut, clean-shaven man. For all his projects and mechanic work, he didn't wander around in dirty work clothes. He was very proud of his hair, and for his family, the scent of Brylcreme will certainly bring Richard to mind. His daughters would even put towels on the backs of their upholstered chairs when they knew their father was coming to their houses. After Richard lost the hair on top, Helen says it still took him longer than any woman to fix the hair he had left on the sides of his head. Shortly before he died, Steve was helping give his dad a haircut and

a shave. Richard looked into the mirror and said, "Who is that handsome dude," and smiled. Richard had some definite favorites in his life. Beer, of course. Cigarettes were another pleasure enjoyed by Richard. He would buy the grandkids and great-grandkids candy cigarettes so they could smoke like Pa. After his heart surgeries, he was supposed to quit, but that was easier said than done. He would smoke while driving, hiding the cigarettes in his jacket pocket or under a rag on the front seat, thinking Helen and the family wouldn't know. They could smell it on him, so he would visit Cindy and Tami where they worked at the casino and then he could honestly say the smoke smell was from there. Once, Helen noticed all the jackets hanging by the door, and decided to wash them all, but didn't empty the pockets. The water in her washing machine was thick with tobacco. Smoking was a hard pleasure to break. Richard also enjoyed gambling and many fun trips with family and friends were made to Newtown, Deadwood, and Nevada. Granddaughter Tara remembers one trip to Vegas that she and her sister, Tami, and brother Jeremy made with their grandparents. They were quite young and the trip was made in Grandpa's motorhome. What was so memorable to the kids was how loong a trip it seemed. Partly because Richard was a slow driver, and but mostly because they all had to enjoy another favorite of their grandpa's, polka music, all the way to Vegas and back. Richard loved his polka's. Richard was a meat and potatoes man; he didn't care for pasta or salads, he hated Chinese, and he didn't eat leftovers. He did like fish and seafood. On he and Helen's 58th anniversary in January, Cindy made them lobster, and even though Richard was sick, he ate his whole lobster. His favorite snack was sardines and crackers. He loved chocolate, especially Three Musketeers and Hershey candy bars. Cowboy movies and TV shows were what Richard watched with a passion. His children claimed that they were a distant second to his first love, John Wayne. But above all else, Richard loved his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and they in turn adored him. Richard and Helen spent many hours with them and many memories have been made

with both generations. The sign in Richard's garage states, "If I had known how much fun grandkids were, I'd have had them first!" The title "grandpa" was shortened to just "Pa". And Pa was their biggest cheerleader and supporter. He was their playmate and friend. Pa was there for many important moments in their lives. At granddaughter Tara's wedding, he walked her down the aisle to where her parents were waiting to give her away. When Tara's first child, son Carson, was about to be delivered, Richard was among the family at the hospital. The doctor came in and announced that everyone not included in the delivery of the baby should leave. Richard just looked around as if that did not include him. They almost had to force Richard to leave the delivery room. After his first great-grandchild, Carson, was born, Richard would hit the table and say to all, "Isn't he something!" Grandson Jeremy loved electronics, and received Dirt Devil vacuums as gifts to help Pa clean vehicles. Grandson Dalton loved to sit in Pa's lap or wrestle with pa on the floor. Grandson Bobby loved to play horsey with Pa or watch 'injuns' on TV together. Serena looked forward to Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve with the family, and loved how Pa would always ask, "how you doing, kiddo?" Pa sang the "duck" song to great-granddaughter Kailee every time he saw her, and Kailee loved to share cokes with pa and smoke with him...candy cigarettes of course. Grandson Dillon enjoyed going to McDonald's with Grandpa for Chicken McNuggets. Dillon also wrote this note; "Grandpa, I was sure glad to be able to spend Christmas with you, I had a good time. Pa, keep your truck out of the river." Grandson Dallas wrote, "Grandpa, I had a great time Thanksgiving being with you. Mom and Dad wish you wouldn't have taught us the duck song. We sang it all the way home and drove mom and dad nuts!" Granddaughter Allie wrote, "I remember when I used to go to Lincoln elementary school half days and my Pa would come pick me up. Grandma and Pa lived exactly a block and a half from the school, but my Pa would have to come pick me up because he didn't want anything to happen to me. Every Friday we would rock out to a polka tape on our way to the stockyards so we could watch them pigs get sold. Pa was my best friend. I loved to spend time with my grandma and Pa. I have so

many memories with my Pa and I will cherish them forever. Allie”

Granddaughter Amanda wrote, “I have a lot of great memories with Pa but I can only share some of them. I will always remember when Pa picked me up from school in his S10. We would rock out to some polka. We would always drive around the block so we could listen to more polka. When we would get home we would listen to the singing fish. Then we would come into the house and watch Gunsmoke and Walker, the Texas Ranger. Then my mom or dad would come and I hated leaving my Pa. I loved when he would play baseball with me in the back yard. He was the best grandpa I could have. Amanda”

And to sum it up for everyone, son Donnie and his wife Kelly wrote to Richard, “We will miss you!” To his friends and neighbors, Richard was caring and kind. He got along with everyone and never talked badly of anyone. Whether it was help with a project, delivering a needed meal, or giving a ride home from the Southside Tavern, Richard would always help out. Since 1975, Richard has had three heart surgeries, two back surgeries, and most recently battled cancer. During his fight with cancer, Richard did not spend time in the hospital, but chose to be at home. During these last weeks of life, Richard was on medication for the pain, but because of the medication taking care of the pain, his spirits were quite good, and with family around him, there were some distinctly enjoyable times. One evening, the family prepared a meal of German food, which they all ate with Richard. Another evening, Richard decided that it was time for everyone to have a beer. Beer was brought out, some was poured in a glass with a straw for Richard, and all sixteen family members present had beer with him. Even Richard was able to drink a sip. One thing that Richard did complain about was that he was angry with John Wayne. In the movie “The Shootist” John had cancer and died. Richard was going to have a talk with John when he got to heaven. He wanted John to know that having cancer wasn’t as easy as John had made it look in the movie. And losing Richard will not be easy for all who knew and loved him. We recognize value of this good man to his family, friends, and community. Richard will be greatly missed. But if you think of Richard as being in heaven,

remember what his cousin Leonard Diefel told the family, "Heaven must be a good place because no one has ever come back." To conclude his eulogy, please listen to a letter written by Richard's daughter, Cindy. "For you Dad! I love you and will miss you with all my heart! This is for you, the father I love, for the one who has cared all these years, but who has never heard enough about how much I care and love you! For you are the one who has helped me through all my fears and failures and you always stood by me! You are the father whose devotion to his family is marked with gentle strength and guidance, and whose sense of direction and down to earth wisdom makes more sense to me than any other thing I have ever learned from you. Dad, I just want you to know how much I respect you and admire you and I think you are the best father any child could ever have. Thank you for always being there. I just can't imagine life without you. Cindy" Please listen now to a song chosen by the family. Song: "To Know Him is to Love Him" by Dolly Parton  
Speaker: Niece Alice Warrenburg Closing: Celebrant There is no finer tribute to Richard than the number of people who came here today to remember him. When someone dies, a hole is left in our hearts. Richard was a significant presence in the lives of family and friends. He was a good man and a special person, and we are grateful for his touch on our lives. That touch will be carried forever in the hearts of all who knew and loved Richard. Helen, Donnie, Cindy, Glenna, Steven, and to all of Richard's family, we grieve with you and we grieve for you. As friends and community, we should never assume that a friend wants to mourn alone. The family will need us in the coming weeks and months. When something reminds you of Richard, share it with them. Send a note, e-mail, call or stop and visit. Let Helen and the family know what a significant impact Richard had on your life and that you will always remember him. During this next year there will be many firsts, birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and at these times Richard's absence will be felt with a fresh sense of loss. Be very present at these times and honor the memory of this fine man. The good-byes we say today are to Richard's

physical presence. Richard will remain a part of those whose lives he touched. "To live in hearts we leave behind, is not to die." As a final tribute to Richard today, his grandchildren and great-grandchildren will release balloons immediately following the committal service at the cemetery. These balloons will carry much love for Richard Mittlestadt, as they soar to the heavens to find him. Let us listen to a final song followed by spiritual words of comfort from Reverend Hageman.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Richard Mittlestadt*

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