



Robert Austin

May 29, 1921 - April 10, 2013

Beach, North Dakota: Robert Edmond Austin, age 91, of Beach, passed away on Monday, April 1, 2013 at the Eastern Montana Veterans Home in Glendive, Montana. He will be remembered for his sense of humor and dedication to serving his community, country and fellow veterans. Visitation will be from 9:00 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M. until 8:00 P.M. on Tuesday, April 9, 2013 at the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home in Beach. A Life Tribute Service will be held at 11:00 A.M. on Wednesday, April 10, 2013 at the American Legion Hall in New England, North Dakota with Celebrant Sandy Silha officiating. Interment with military honors will follow at Havelock Cemetery in Havelock, North Dakota. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Beach has been entrusted with the arrangements. Robert was born on May 29, 1921 in his parents' home near Havelock, a son of Gunder and Emily (Johnson) Austin; the youngest of eight children. He was educated in Havelock Consolidated and New England Public School. In 1941, Robert enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps during WWII. He graduated from pilot training and was commissioned to be a Second Lieutenant on the same day he married Anise Wilmoth in June 1943. Robert and Anise had three children; Sandra, Robert Jr. and Janice. In 1945 Robert was honorably discharged from military service. Following military service he enrolled in college where he received a bachelor degree in Physical Education. He was later called back for active duty for the Korean War and became a career officer. Robert retired in 1966 and went on to teach Reserve Officers Training Corps in High School. Robert

was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and very active in the American Legion where he achieved the highest office of Department of Commander in Washington. He and Anna later divorced and Robert returned to his roots in North Dakota. He enjoyed going to dances where he met Joyce Metcalf and they were later married in December of 1992. They settled in Beach and were active in the Golden Valley County Senior Citizens Center, VFW and American Legion. Robert was preceded in death by his wife, Joyce Austin; his first wife, Anna Austin; his parents, Gunder and Emily Austin and seven brothers and sisters. Robert is survived by his two daughters, Sandra (Eric) Warnken of Dixon, California and Janice Beaumont of Billings, Montana; one son, Robert (Cindy) Austin Jr. of Everett, Washington; seven grandchildren, Michael and Samuel Warnken, Austin and Rachelle Beaumont, Wesley (Nora) and Tyler (Sherry) Austin and Ashlee (Shaen) Boekenoogen; five great-grandchildren, Dexter Austin, Ryan and Kylie Austin and Grace and Resse Boekenoogen; one step-son, Ronald (Karen) Metcalf of Sidney, Montana; one step-daughter, Linda (Howard) Ridenhower of Beach; six step-grandchildren, Dallas (Misty) Metcalf of Sidney, Darnell (Casey) Wersland of Selfridge, North Dakota, Gwen (Kevin) Dahlen of Beach, Paul (Jodi) Ridenhower of Beach, Mark (Kim) Ridenhower of Baker, Montana, and John (Michele Wicka) Ridenhower of Billings; twelve step great-grandchildren, Chelsey, Chase, BreAnna, Jessa, Joshua, Jaleesa, Mikayla, Casey, Sage, Anna, Sheldon, and Brooklyn; one brother-in-law, Glen Snow of Dickinson, North Dakota; two sisters-in-law, Lola Fong of Dickinson and Elda Fischer of Bismarck, North Dakota and numerous nieces and nephews. Remembrances and condolences may be shared with the family at: www.silvernale-silhafuneralhome.com. Eulogy: Robert began life in 1921, the youngest of eight children, raised on a farm near Havelock, North Dakota. In his autobiography, Robert tells of his growing up years. As the youngest, his sister Ragna was assigned the task of looking out for Robert and accounting for him to their parents. He says that living on a farm required that he had to do chores, and being the youngest, he got all the chores that no one else wanted to do. Robert's daily

activities included following his older brothers around and watching them fix things on the farm. When they weren't around, Robert says he would pretend to fix things but recalls breaking more than he fixed. When Robert would hear his brother, George, coming, Robert would take off running. That was how Robert discovered that he could run pretty fast. It was in following his brothers around and being their "gofer" that Robert learned about auto repair and dreamed of doing a whole Model A from start to finish. He also found he had an aptitude for electronics when his brother came home with a radio, and Robert got it working. Throughout his life, Robert enjoyed working with his hands, tinkering, inventing, woodworking, and he became a regular "Mr. Fix-it." In the third grade, Robert discovered sports, and credits sports with giving him incentive to excel. He says he would eat fast and be off to play softball, volleyball, and run track. Robert went on to set many records in track, and later to coach youngsters in baseball. Teaching sports to his own children are favorite memories they have of time with their father. Throughout his life, Robert enjoyed music. He tells a story about raising a piglet as a pet, but finally selling it to buy a guitar. Self taught, he finally learned to play well enough that he and his sister, Lila, who played accordion, would play for dances. Robert was a very busy young fellow as he grew to manhood in rural North Dakota and he certainly learned a strong work ethic. But he also had a keen sense of humor and he honed it by playing practical jokes and teasing. One incident Robert told about was he and his brothers spoofing his father by taking apart a wagon and putting it together on the barn roof. It was a whole lot of work and so a bit disappointing when Gunder didn't react very excitably over the prank. After his graduation from high school, Robert attended the State School of Science in Wahpeton, North Dakota, where he studied aviation mechanics. After a year of school, Robert enlisted in the United States Army Corps, and served during World War II. Robert tells that the Corps was looking for volunteers to train as pilots. His buddy volunteered and Robert thought that seemed like a good thing, so he too signed up to train and

become a pilot. During his pilot training, Robert met Anise Wilmoth, and they were married on the same day Robert was commissioned as a pilot and Second Lieutenant. He was quickly deployed to fight in the European theater of the war as a combat pilot, flying a P-38 fighter, lucky number 13. Daughter Janice points out that in all of her father's photos of his time in the military, Robert is very stoic, except the one you can find in the memory folder. In that photo, Robert stands near his plane, very proudly smiling, enjoying his status as a pilot of the P-38. Robert loved that plane. He felt that the training he received, the plane, and its equipment and guns were superior to all others and lent to his success. He talks about flying one particular mission when the supercharger of the plane's engine blew up and he could not outrun the enemy. So he turned and fought them head on, taking shrapnel, but driving them off. Robert turned down the Purple Heart that was recommended for that mission, saying he had done nothing extraordinary, it was the plane and equipment that excelled. Robert was honorably discharged in 1945, and he and Anise began civilian life in North Dakota where Robert farmed and worked in the coal mine. But making a living to support his young family did not look promising in North Dakota, so Robert returned to college in California, graduated with a bachelor's degree and began teaching. When the Korean Conflict broke out, Robert was recalled to active duty. He served as an instructor pilot and later was sent to Korea and Japan. Following the Korean conflict, Robert made the Air Force a career. He flew C-121's and C-123's. He served in Japan as the commander of the commissary. He continued to instruct pilots. In all, Robert served 20 years in the Air Force and 5 years in the reserves. Highly decorated over his career, Robert was most proud to be recognized and appreciated as a part of the "greatest generation" and he retired with the rank of Major. Following his retirement from the military, Robert taught in the ROTC program at a high school in Washington. Robert was not only educated to instruct others, he was a born teacher. An intelligent man, he was always sharing his experiences, his knowledge, and his talents. Robert taught and lived by the premise that everyone had potential, and he never

gave up on anyone. Robert loved his time in the military, and his eyes would light up when he would talk about it. He promoted the military as a way to better your life and educate yourself. Robert also became very involved in the American Legion. He recognized that many veterans struggled with life after the military, and it became his mission to help and offer relief to veterans and their families. Sometimes it was a personal effort of money or groceries. Other times he directed vets to programs and services designed for veterans. He served as the Department Commander of the Washington State American Legion, and was a huge advocate for veterans. His dedication was lifelong. During his time in the military, Robert and Anise were raising their family, two daughters, Sandra and Janice, and a son, Robert Jr. The military moves their people around, so life for the family was to follow Robert wherever he was stationed when families were allowed. Robert did not care to live on base if possible, preferring to keep his family in regular neighborhoods. Robert had no gender bias and expected his daughters could do anything they set their mind to. He encouraged his children in sports, and Sandra and Janice especially remember him teaching them softball. Sandra recalls her dad telling her “not to be a marshmallow.” He taught them to ride a bike, and to drive a stick shift car, parallel park and drive defensively. Sandra says he enjoyed waking them up in the morning by rubbing his whiskered face across their cheeks. In turn, his children taught Robert that shaving got you kisses. Robert had a huge sweet tooth, and his kids got to share their Halloween and Easter candy with him. Sandra has inherited his sweet tooth. Every year the military gave Robert a month off, and he would use that time to take his family to national parks, and to visit relatives. Janice says his love for them was unconditional. He was a rock, and always there for them. For Janice, her dad was her “angel in her pocket.” Janice says that with her dad, what you saw was what you got. As grown children, their dad visited often and stayed in touch. Robert made the effort and took time to know his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and he has tried to chronicle his life experiences so that they may know him and what was important in his life. He has inspired his

family with his work ethic, and his selfless service to our nation, our veterans, and his community. Not only do they love him, they admire him, and are very proud to call him father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. And this includes Robert's second family. Robert and Anise were divorced and eventually Robert returned to North Dakota. He and Joyce Metcalf met at a singles club dance in Dickinson, and were later married, enjoying 19 years together. They loved to travel and were always ready to hit the road for military reunions or family reunions. If two could be combined into one trip, so much the better. Both Robert and Joyce enjoyed music and would travel to bluegrass festivals and camp in their trailer. Every fall, they would head to Minot to enjoy the Hostfest. Weekly activities were playing cards and bowling. One thing that people noticed about them was that they held hands all the time. When Joyce was ill and in the hospital, Robert would come to visit and wouldn't talk, but just sit with her and hold her hand. When Robert and Joyce first got to know each other and early in their marriage, Joyce's granddaughter, Darnell, was going to high school in Beach and stayed with her grandmother. At first she didn't know what to think of Robert. But the icebreaker came due to Robert's sweet tooth. Joyce was making molasses cookies, with both Robert and Darnell watching her take them out of the oven. Robert threw down the gauntlet first by declaring a particular cookie to be his. Darnell then picked the one topped with sugar as hers, and they went back and forth this way, claiming cookies. The silliness made them smile and bond. It became a game they continued to play. They also began to exchange inexpensive, silly gifts at Christmas. A memorable one for Darnell, which showcased Robert's craftiness and his creativeness, was a small, wooden toy car that he built. It had an open top and inside he put three walnuts and told Darnell that now she could "drive them nuts." At Christmas, when the family would gather at Joyce's, Robert would claim to need to go downstairs to supervise the kids, when really he just liked to play with them. He loved games, especially rummycube. A good gift for Robert, anytime, was books on history. Joyce's

daughter Linda, says that Robert liked to talk about the military and when Joyce's great-grandson, Josh, had to write a paper about someone as a school assignment, he chose Robert. He and Robert spent quality time together, with Robert telling him life stories for his assignment. Joyce's son, Ron, remembers the first branding his mom brought Robert to. When the end of the branding day came, Robert's comment to Ron was that it was an "interesting program." Ron chuckled a bit over Robert's terminology but found Robert to be very sincere and honest. Robert always had a genuine interest in how Ron's ranch was doing and enjoyed coming out, especially at calving time. Robert was always willing to help out until his health prevented him from doing so. The last few years of Robert's life were complicated by health issues. His daughters tried to care for their father, but finally they placed him in the Eastern Montana Veterans Home in Glendive, Montana. But even there this quiet, reserved gentleman kept his sense of humor. Known to the staff as non-verbal, Robert was a quiet presence. He bonded with a caregiver, Linda Rupp, and she found him delightful. One of the activities the residents would play was a type of golf. Robert was watching and Linda was sitting with him talking to him. All of a sudden, Robert said "They don't know what they are doing, " and tried to get up to show them. Once Linda knew Robert could verbalize, she began to spend more time having conversations with him. He might engage her in a challenge of throwing a pretend ball, or sit wiggling and talk about riding a train. He was fun and funny and the other residents enjoyed his games too. Sometimes they wouldn't participate if Robert wasn't there. One day Linda asked Robert what he wanted to talk about. Robert replied "solar panels," and then proceeded to tell her about them, and he knew what he was talking about. He was a special resident, and will be missed by both the staff and the other residents. Robert's family appreciates the wonderful care he received while in the care of the Eastern Montana Veterans Home. Robert would have been 92 years old in May. He lived a long, full life dedicated to service. People mattered to Robert; veterans mattered. Robert Edmond Austin was a man people enjoyed, respected, admired and loved. He

will be greatly missed.

Tribute Wall



“ *Robert Austin*

December 07, 2022 at 04:10 PM