



## Walter Kaiser

May 6, 1926 - May 17, 2008

Walter E. Kaiser, 81, died May 2, 2008 at the Glendive Medical Center in Glendive. A Life Tribute Service will be held at 4:00 P.M., Saturday, May 17, 2008 in the Chapel of the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home in Glendive with Celebrant Sandy Silha officiating. Interment will be in the Dawson Memorial Cemetery. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive is entrusted with arrangements. Walter was born on May 6, 1926 in Iowa, the son of Adolph and Martha (Aldag) Kaiser. He moved to Sidney, Montana as a child with his parents to a farm one mile north of Sidney. Walter received his education in Sidney schools. He farmed on the family farm until the age of 21 when he married Alma Odenbach on November 30, 1947 in Sidney. He and his wife farmed in the Sidney area for a short time before moving to Oregon where Walter worked as a logger for ten years, after which they returned to farming in the Glendive area. They moved to California in 1985 where they lived until their retirement. Walter and Alma returned to Glendive in 1991. Walter was preceded in death by his wife in September of 2007. Walter was an avid fisherman and hunter and he also enjoyed gardening. He was a member of the Glendive Alliance Church and the National Rifle Association. Walter was preceded in death by three brothers. Survivors include one son, Steven Kaiser and his wife Michelle of Bullhead City, Arizona and their children, Elizabeth Kaiser of Glendive and Lindsay Kaiser of Las Vegas, Nevada; three daughters, Dawn Smith and her husband Forrest and their children Heather Cortes and Holly Smith of Suisun City, California, Barbara Stimson and her

husband Jeff and their children Morgan and Adrienne of Lakewood, Colorado and Colleen Lee and her husband Scott of Glendive and their children Eran Lee of Billings, Montana and Emily Lee of Worden, Montana; one sister, Olga Winchester of Medford, Oregon; four great grandchildren and many much loved nieces and nephews. Celebrant service: Today is a very important day. Today we pay tribute to and celebrate Walter Kaiser's life and times among us, we recognize the difference his living and dying made among family and community, and we take time to express our grief, our hope, and our memories. Today we will honor the memories of a life that touched us and remains alive in our hearts. Walt was very dynamic; fun and funny, crusty but caring, full of mischief but righteous in his beliefs. Walt's daughter, Barbara, claims that if you look up stubborn and curmudgeon in the dictionary, you will find Walt's name behind them. But he was always fun, and there were many arguments as to just who got the honor of being his favorite. A big man, physically, and with a strong personality, Walt could be quite intimidating, but he was really a teddy bear at heart. He truly cared about the people in his life and the world around him. Walt had a deep love of God and family and you didn't have to be a blood relative to have Walt consider you family. Walt didn't have just four kids, he had eight. He always included the in-laws when talking about his kids. These last years, Walt had taken to calling his extended family of nieces, nephews, and friends his "best siblings." Walt also had pet nicknames for his beloved grandkids, who he called "Bums", and for the great-grandkids, who Walt referred to as "Little Oscars". And then there were the stories...Walt was a great storyteller. He loved to talk and tell stories. He had an amazing memory and a very good and subtle sense of humor. Walt enjoyed making people laugh and he was very good at it. One favorite story of Walt's, was about his dog, Trixie. Trixie belonged to Walt as a boy, and the story goes that young Walt said to a friend, 'I bet you have never seen a dog that could read.' His friend didn't believe it, so Walt bet him a nickel. Walt's friend said 'alright prove it'. As they approached a park bench with a sign on it, Walt said, 'Trixie, what does that say?' Trixie promptly went up to the bench,

raised her leg and urinated all over the bench. Walt's friend got the joke and laughed hard. The sign read, Caution, Wet Paint! So, Trixie wet it. Everyone loved Walt's stories. His daughters, when growing up, would get Walt started telling his stories at mealtime just to avoid doing dishes. Walt could come up with stories about anything, anytime. One day, out in the beet fields with his young daughter, Barbara and her cousin Joan, a flock of geese flew over in a V-formation and he asked the girls if they knew why one side of the V was longer than the other. Of course they didn't. Walt chewed on his cigarette and pondered the formation a bit and then said, "because one side has more geese than the other." And he smiled at having gotten them. By the way, it was Barbara and Joan who christened Walt with the nickname that has stuck over the years, "Schmalter". Walt loved to "get" or "get to" those around him. He was a merciless tease, and was always setting someone up for a trick or prank; or getting them in trouble. Walt's niece, Kathy Sharbono, remembers Walt getting her into trouble. Kathy and Alma had just cleaned the house. Walt came in for a nap and told Kathy that the house was too clean and he couldn't sleep. Would she, Kathy, get the newspaper and scatter it around the living room? Walt was sure he would be more comfortable in a mess and be able to sleep. Kathy did as Uncle Walt asked. Walt put one page of the newspaper over his face and pretended to be asleep. Alma came in, saw the mess and started giving Kathy the what for, with Walt chuckling under the newspaper. Speaking of naps, Walt was famous for his fifteen minute naps. Barbara claims her father could "roll wallpaper with his snores." Son-in-law Scott Lee, can testify that Walt could fall asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow, and then just as you would begin to dose off, Walt would wake up energized and ready to go. Daughter, Colleen recalls that when Walt had you totally frustrated, he would look at you with his intensely blue eyes, and say "I was just trying to get your goat; do you still luf me?" Walt enjoyed so many things in life, the people in his life, his stories, reading, spiritual and gospel music, animals, hunting, fishing, gardening, logging, card games, limburger cheese

and jelly on crackers, and headcheese. Walt had a few regrets too. He regretted smoking. He regretted not finishing his education. And he regretted saying “no” so often. Walt was a middle child in a German family, who grew up on a farm in the Sidney, Montana area. He learned early to be a good worker, but he could always find fun. Walt’s cousin and good friend, Rolland Kaiser, grew up with Walt and the two spent a great deal of time swimming the river, hunting, and fishing. Walt and Rolland were more like brothers, and were referred to as “catznjammers” after the mischievous newspaper comic strip characters. Rolland clearly recalls a Christmas when Walt was about ten, and Walt and his brother had received BB guns for Christmas. The weather was bad and they could not go outside to try out the new guns, so they stood across the living room from the Christmas tree and proceeded to target shoot at the ornaments on their mother’s tree. Walt began smoking at age ten, a habit he continued throughout life. He generally rolled his own but if he smoked store-bought, he would pull out the filters. Ron Brockway, a best friend of Walt’s for past 60 years, spent much time hunting and fishing with Walt. Ron remembers he and Walt doing farm work together, one day they would work at Walt’s place and the next at Ron’s. Ron also recalls the two of them chasing girls together. That ended when Walt met Alma, and Walt became a one-woman man. After Walt met Alma, they were a true couple. They worked hard together, played together, took fishing vacations, and shared whatever they had, never turning anyone away. Many people would stop to visit, help with the work, spend summers or just move in because they needed a place to go. The door was always open. A niece, Vicki Willert, tells of her parents divorcing and no one wanting her and her siblings. But Uncle Walt and Aunt Alma did, and they took Vicki and two of her siblings in for a summer, treating them at times, as Vicki remembers, “better than their own kids.” Thus began a friendship that will last forever. Actually, Walt and Alma helped raise and guide many youngsters over the years, some related, some not. All treated as part of the family. Another niece, Kay Leslie, also went through difficult times and calls Walt her “rock.” She came to know Walt and

Alma best when they lived and worked in Oregon. Leslie viewed Walt and Alma as a “shining example of what life and marriage should be.” The following was written by Walt’s son, Steve, about their time in Oregon: “My first memory of my father was watching him drive our car to Oregon when I was 4 or 5 years old. Dad and Mom were starting a new life, with a car, 2 kids and the clothes that would fit into the car. He started as a logger, driving a logging truck for a small company in Southern Oregon. We moved into a one-room shack next to a truck park and a machine shop. I remember him taking me by the hand, walking around those huge monster log trucks and picking me up so I could see inside the cabs. A short time later, we moved into a real house. While in this house my father taught me my first lesson, boys don’t hit girls for any reason! A lesson I never forgot. I can remember he loved to whistle while he shaved; Mom said he sounded like a songbird. Later, when mom was pregnant with my sister Barbara, we moved to a larger house. It was near a creek where Dad & I could fish. He bought me a fishing pole, showed me how to tie a hook to the line, how to catch and put on bait. I thought I was set for life. Dad especially loved to fish for steelhead trout. I can remember him walking into the kitchen with a smile on his face to show mom and tell her he caught his trophies. As a breadwinner, my father worked very hard, long hours. Being a logger was a dangerous, harsh, and very demanding job. I remember waking at 4:30 in the morning with mom making Dad breakfast, and then he would be off to work not returning until late at night. It seems that my sisters and I wouldn’t see him for weeks, especially during the summer months. During the winter months, he would spend his time in the machine shop repairing machinery for the coming spring. We lived 11 years in Oregon and my father was a logger the entire time. He was tall and strong as a giant and I was very proud of him. Years later, I asked him why we moved to Oregon. He said, ‘Son, a man’s first responsibility is to provide for his family even if it means moving halfway across the country.’” Steve goes on to say: “In 1963, he loaded the car and moved to the farm in Montana. For the first time in my life, I had daily contact with my father. I knew

nothing of farming or how to run the machinery. Dad had to coach me on how farm equipment worked or this piece turns one way or the other; he had to teach me everything and sometimes he wasn't a very patient coach. It seemed all the swear words that worked in the woods of Oregon worked in Montana as well. Irrigating beets and beans together also meant we spent time just sitting in the pickup and waiting. This time was spent usually in casual talk and sometimes he would get a serious look on his face and say 'Son, remember this, your word is the only thing you're born with that's free. If you give your word and go back on it, others will see you have no honor and can't be trusted.' Or 'Son, remember this, if you work hard at your job, you will be rewarded, no one gets anywhere by being lazy.'" Walt took farming seriously, working very hard as a farmer, and he was a good farmer. You can probably still see him in your mind's eye, a tall, big shouldered man with his crooked smile, wearing bib overalls partially tucked into his boots, his kerchief bandana somewhere close, walking towards his fields or garden. Walt loved gardening and growing vegetables. Walt also raised registered Hereford cattle for a time. Walt had a special way with animals. He knew his cattle and they knew him. Neighbors and friends often would bring their animals to Walt to care for or take in. Walt's daughter, Dawn, recalls Walt saying that when he gave up his Herefords it was harder than giving up the farm. Daughter, Barbara, states that Walt should not have been a farmer, even though he was very good at it. Barbara feels Walt should have been a professor, because he was always learning and teaching. Both he and Alma were avid readers. Walt loved to read factual things, such as encyclopedias and dictionaries. Having only had a tenth grade education, Walt loved learning and he loved sharing what he had learned, whether it was from reading or from experience. A humorous trait that Walt did have was that he seemed to think knowledge was inherited. His children remember many times when Walt would give them one-word instructions or hand signals, and expect them to know just what he meant. If he needed you to check the irrigation he might grunt and point, "field,

pick-up, noon” and you were supposed to know exactly what he was talking about. There were countless times that Joe Sharbono benefited from Walt’s knowledge about farming and many other things. If Joe had a problem on his farm, he would talk with Walt about it and tell Walt how he planned to solve the problem. Walt would never tell Joe that Joe’s methods wouldn’t work, Walt would just say “Well, here’s what worked for me.” And most often, Joe found Walt to be right. Walt taught many life lessons by his words and by his example. Son, Steve has these thoughts: “Dad always told me that fathers are teachers for their children besides being a breadwinner and family leader. I loved my father and honor him with a few of the many lessons he taught me: 1. A father’s job is to care and provide the best he can. Your family is more important than yourself or others. 2. By keeping your word, you gain trust and respect. 3. A father’s job is to love his children equally. 4. To mature, a man has to be accountable for his actions. 5. Jesus Christ came for everyone-no exceptions. 6. Forgiveness can cover decades of time and set things right in your soul. Amen.” Another life lesson Walt taught his children, was to laugh at yourself. Dawn tells the story about Walt and Alma coming for her daughter’s college graduation. During their visit, they had packed up a box of things to mail home. The box was quite bulky and heavy and Dawn had a bad back, so Walt went with Dawn to the post office to carry the box in to mail. There was quite a long line, and Walt set the box on a center counter and just slid it along as they made their way to be waited on by the postal worker. Upon reaching the end of the counter, Walt grabbed the box and hefted it up to carry it to the main counter. Dawn saw Walt’s eyes open wide with a startled look, and he immediately dropped the box back on the counter. Walt had forgotten to put on his suspenders, and in lifting the box his pants had dropped down. He quickly pulled them up, but both he and Dawn just cracked up with laughter. They got the box mailed and got back to the car, still laughing. Every once in a while after that, when Dawn would be with her father, she would ask him if he had on his suspenders, and they both would start laughing as they remembered the incident. Walt could appreciate humor even when the joke

was on him. Ervin Mitchell, a close friend of Walt's, recalls one particular day of bird hunting with Walt. Walt was carrying an old pump action shotgun from his youth that he had named "Meat in the Pot", and Ervin had an automatic shotgun. Some birds flew up, and before Ervin could get off a shot, Walt had brought down three. Ervin says to Walt, "It's no fun hunting if you aren't going to let me shoot." After a bit, Walt replied, "You're right. Go ahead, you can shoot all you want; you can't hit anything, anyway." Another story that Ervin tells is of driving around Walt's fields, looking at the crops. Seeing one particular cornfield, it was apparent that Walt had had a problem driving a straight line, and Ervin quickly pointed out the crooked cornrows to his friend. Walt turned to Ervin to remind Ervin that crooked rows grow more corn. Throughout his life, Walt enjoyed hunting. Bill Odenbach, a nephew, tells of a deer pulling a good one on he and Walt. They were driving down the road and spotted a deer laid down in some brush along a creek. Neither had a gun, so they went back to Walt's and got guns, came back and the deer was still in the brush laid down. They shot the deer where it lay, but the problem was they had to drive across the creek, and try to get close enough to the water where it lay to load it. Before they could figure out how to load the deer, to their amazement, it jumped up and landed in the back of the pickup. Bill and Walt knew it was a hard story to believe, but that's what happened. To Walt, his friendships were very special and very meaningful. Besides the fun and jokes, besides the hunting and fishing, Walt would share his deepest feelings and thoughts with his friends about life, his family, his faith. His friends knew that Walt deeply loved his children and had concerns for them. Ervin treasures these conversations and the prayers he and Walt shared. A special memory son Steve has about his father's faith is as follows: "When I was 19, Dawn came running up to me excited; 'Guess what? Dad went forward and accepted Christ.' They just had returned from a Wednesday night church revival. When Dad came into the house, he didn't say anything about it, nor did I. The next morning as we sat in the pickup together, he looked at me and said, "Son, it was a long time coming, better sooner than later." It was the first

time I ever saw my father with a tear in his eye. I saw my father's personality change completely after that day. I was only on the farm for a couple more years after he was saved. The biggest change was in his vocabulary; he never swore at me or called me names again. He smiled and laughed more than I ever saw him do." Walt was a very special grandfather to his "Bums", and "Little Oscars". He played with them, told them his stories, bragged on them, and set a good example for them to live by. They in turn loved Walt and respected the man he was and his relationship with Christ. Granddaughter Heather Cortes feels she has his stubbornness and his philosophy of doing things his own way, and in his own time. Heather could even appreciate his anger, because as she puts it, his "anger was usually justified and righteous". Granddaughters, Eran and Emily Lee, remember how their grandfather hated them going fishing with a net in the minnow tank, but always laughed at them when they told him how they had caught tons of fish. Eran also remembers Walt's concern for the grandkids when they learned to drive. He would give them all a lecture about safe driving, and Eran also received an article Walt had read and cut out of a newspaper about the subject. Eran put the article in her car, where it remains to this day, to remind her how important safe driving is and how important she was to her grandpa. One of granddaughter, Holly Smith's, favorite memories of her grandfather is when Holly was about 3 years old and her sister was 4. Walt had to feed the cows and calves. He put the truck in low gear, and had Holly's sister stand on the seat with her hands on the steering wheel. Grandpa told her to keep the truck straight on the road. It was a long, straight road, and the truck was moving at a snail's pace. There they were, a 4 year old driving, her 3 year old sister staring out the back at grandpa, who was in the bed of the truck throwing out hay and feed. Granddaughter, Elizabeth Kaiser, who knew her grandfather very early in her life and then very late in Walt's life, came and stayed with her grandfather these last few months. This important time allowed them to get reacquainted and make some special memories. Walt loved the fact that Elizabeth set up

the computer so he could play fifty kinds of solitaire. Walt loved playing cards. And Elizabeth's being with Walt allowed the rest of the family peace of mind, knowing someone who cared was close to Walt at all times. And Walt's only grandson, Morgan Stimson, holds his grandfather up as a role model and hero. Morgan remembers countless games of cribbage where Walt would teach that you should count and count carefully, otherwise Walt would take the points and chuckle about it. Morgan also remembers a visit to Montana on the 4th of July and Grandpa getting into mischief. Imagine a package of Black Cat firecrackers and a huge anthill. Morgan and grandpa didn't run quite fast enough. Morgan saw his grandpa as someone who would help anyone in need, and learned from Walt to always help those in need even if you don't have much to give. Morgan wrote the following about his Grandpa Walt:

"Grandpa was a man of strength. The man I hope to one day be...I hope to be like him with his subtle sense of humor and great stories. He loved us all so much and especially after grandma passed, he loved us that much more. He will be greatly missed and I will always hold a special place in my heart for the man who taught me to be kind, caring and to stand up for what was right and to tell him when he was wrong. I'll miss him always. Later Days, Morgan

The loss of Alma last fall was extremely difficult for Walt. The last days Walt was in the hospital, he checked himself out. He told the hospital staff that he was leaving to be with Alma. They thought he was going home to be with his wife, unaware she had died. He did leave the hospital, but had to go right back. He died shortly thereafter. Steve had these thoughts to share about this time in his father life: "After my Mom's funeral this past fall, we again enjoyed time alone together. We talked about our lives and the different paths Jesus leads us down. We relived happy moments together and forgave each other for past mistakes. The passing of his wife left a deep sadness in his eyes. They would light up when he would declare that where Mom goes, he would go also. When it became to leave, he gave me a hug and as usual got the last word in; 'I love all my children more than anything in the world.'" About those words from his father, Steve concludes, "I know because he told me so." Walter

Kaiser will be greatly missed and greatly remembered. Let us now listen to a favorite song of Walt's, "Tumbling Tumbleweed." Song: "Tumbling Tumbleweed" by Sons of the Pioneers" Celebrant: Closing Walt was a presence in many lives for 82 years and although we celebrate his life, there is much grief that he is gone. He has left each you, his eight children, his "Bums", his Little Oscars", his siblings, a part of himself. The memories and stories you have about Schmalter are many, and he will live on through them and through you. We your friends and community celebrate Walt's life with you and we too mourn his death. It was Walt's wish that he be cremated. Along with his clothing, his family made sure Walt had some familiar items with him; his boots and suspenders, a bandana hanky, his glasses and watch, and his daily bread devotional. Today's music selections were favorites of Walt's. The dried roses you see here at the front were in Alma's casket spray last fall. Colleen dried them and will give them to family at Walt's committal service. The vegetable plants and marigolds around Walt's urn pay tribute to his love of gardening and growing vegetables, and after the committal, family members will take a plant to put in their soil at home to remember Walt. The committal at the cemetery will be private. The family hopes you will make yourself comfortable at the Silvernale-Silha Tribute Center across the driveway, perhaps have a cup of coffee. The family will not be long at the cemetery and would like to share food, fellowship, and stories about Walt with you upon their return to the tribute center. Walt touched many lives during his time on this earth. Just as each fingerprint is unique with no two the same, it is the same for the impact that our lives have on others. Each of us has a unique soul and every time we come into contact with others, we leave our soul print. After a closing benediction by Walt's daughter, Dawn, the family invites each of you to leave your fingerprints on Walt's urn to remain, blend together and forever signify the impact and soul print Walt's life has made upon us. As you are ushered from your seat, please come forward and place your touch on Walt's urn. Let it be a touch of friendship in honor of his life and to the belief that "a life shared is a life to never be forgotten." Dawn will now have a final

benediction. Benediction: Dawn Smith Handprint ceremony and song: "When the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day" by Bing Crosby

# Tribute Wall



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