



William "Willie" Day

January 1, 1926 - November 25, 2005

William "Willie" Day, age 79, of Glendive, died on Friday, November 18, 2005 as a result of injuries he sustained in a pedestrian/vehicle accident near Glendive. A Life Tribute Service will be held at 2:00 P.M., Friday, November 25, 2005 at the Washington Middle School Gymnasium in Glendive with Celebrant Sandy Silha officiating. Interment will be in the Dawson Cemetery in Glendive. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home of Glendive is entrusted with arrangements. Willie was born on January 1, 1926 in Hendricks, Oklahoma, the son of Mack Jones and Rose Ella (Bates) Day. He was raised and educated in the Elgin Public Schools in Elgin, Oklahoma. Following his education, Willie worked as a sharecropper in Oklahoma where he was employed picking cotton. He married Katherine Elizabeth Bates on November 21, 1942 in Lawton, Oklahoma. Willie and his wife moved to Richmond, California where Willie learned to weld and became a welder in the shipyards, building ships and performing underwater welding. He and Katherine returned to Oklahoma where he went into business with his brothers in a mechanics shop. He purchased a truck which he used to contract with the military to move army barracks. He later became a custom combiner which ultimately brought he and his wife to Montana. They leased a farming operation in the "Big Hill" area north of Baker and also near Ekalaka. They moved to Marmarth, North Dakota in 1954 where they leased a cattle ranch. In November 1957, Willie and his family moved to Glendive, where they purchased an irrigated farming operation on Crackerbox Creek. Willie

received his private pilot license in 1969. They added some dryland farm ground to their irrigated farming operation in 1972. In 1974, they sold the irrigated farm land so that Willie could pursue a career in politics. In November 1974, Willie was elected Montana State Representative for House District 54 and served for three terms. Willie and Katherine sold their farm in 1990 and lived in their home on Highway 16 since that time. Willie enjoyed visiting, wine making, online investment games, playing cards and dominoes, flying and fishing. He especially loved his grandchildren. Willie had a great sense of humor and enjoyed teasing his friends. Willie served on the Buffalo Rapids Irrigation Project, Northern Plains Resource Council, Friends for Cherry Creek, Montana Farmers Union Board of Directors, Glendive Community Hospital Board, Airport Commission, and the Cedar Creek Grazing Association. He was a volunteer for the Dawson County Search and Rescue and a Dawson County key lobbyist in securing the Eastern Montana Veterans Home in Glendive. Willie was a member of the Democratic Central Committee and was well known within the Montana Democratic Community. Willie is preceded in death by his parents; his son, Jerry Day; two brothers, Troy Day and Alvy Day; and two sisters, Irene Sinor and Dora Kidd. Survivors include his wife, Katherine of Glendive; his daughters, Linda Gregory and her husband Dan of Portland, Oregon and Sandra Waldo and her husband Wade of Bozeman, Montana; his sons, Edward Day and his wife Sharon of Minneapolis, Minnesota and Barry Day and his wife Denise of Huntley, Montana; eight grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. Eulogy by Celebrant Sandy Silha: When you think of William "Willie" Day, how do you remember him? As a Democrat? You probably encountered his strong convictions and his dedication to them; his love of debating anything, everything and nothing with everyone; his energy for life and all it had to offer. Or is your first thought that Willie was a loving, caring husband; a tough, stern father; a doting grandfather; a hard working farmer, rancher, politician; a good and dependable neighbor; a friend who would do anything for you? As Willie comes to mind, the one thing that runs through his 79 years of life is that

William "Willie" Day was a self-made man. Born New Year's Day in 1926, Willie grew up during the depression. He experienced poverty for many years, and began picking cotton as a child for pennies a day. He would tell his own children that if they wanted to know what hard work was they should try picking cotton. Willie learned early in life how to work. When Willie was three, he came down with polio. The polio left Willie with a left arm and hand that was disabled. Willie was sensitive about this and never wanted to be viewed as handicapped. He wore long sleeved shirts even if the temperature was 103 degrees and he learned to use that arm in ways to compensate for it not being normal. He never let it slow him down or not do exactly what he wanted. But when the war came, it did prevent Willie from enlisting and that was difficult for him. Willie learned to weld and became a welder in the shipyards and worked on military ships doing underwater welding. The welding caused him to get galvanized poisoning and he suffered hair loss. You rarely saw Willie out and about without a cap or cowboy hat on his bald head. Willie and Katherine Elizabeth Bates were married November 21, 1942 in Oklahoma. Willie and Katherine would have celebrated their 63rd anniversary this past Monday. Willie and Katherine worked various jobs and moved around. They came to Montana when Willie was doing custom combining. After a several moves in the North Dakota and Eastern Montana area, they settled on irrigated farmland on Crackerbox Creek near Glendive. Willie and Katherine raised four children, two daughters, Linda and Sandra and two sons, Eddie and Barry. The kids grew up farming and ranching. Animals were always a part of the household. Besides the cattle, sheep, horses, and working dogs there were the house pets, cats and pugs, and various wild creatures that the kids and Willie would drag home and try to domesticate. But Willie loved his pugs. He had a special candy bowl of tootsie rolls for them and he made up their plate at meals before he sat down to eat. Needless to say, his pugs were quite stout. His favorite horse was a palomino named Nugget. Nugget was more like a dog than a horse. Nugget would ride around in the box of the pick-up

and would stomp his hoof when he wanted out. Nugget and Willie had a unique way of communicating. When Willie first started farming on Crackerbox, he knew the neighbors did not expect him to last a year. But Willie knew he could make it. He was the only welder on the ditch and a good mechanic and he would drop what he was doing to help his neighbors out when they needed him or asked for his help. Willie's daughter, Sandra, recalls as a youngster in school, having to draw a picture of what her dad did. She didn't draw a farmer but instead saw him and drew him as a mechanic. Willie was a fixer; if it was broken, he fixed it and if it wasn't broken, he improved it. Over the years, Willie was kept busy with his mechanic and welding skills, fixing rebuilding, and creating many things. Willie's formal education ended after eighth grade. But Willie never stopped learning and teaching himself and others. He was an avid reader and loved working with figures. Willie's favorite thinking spot was in the bathroom. Trade journals, magazines and reams of paper with calculations were always present in the bathroom. When working with figures, it would take several sheets of paper to get to get to a solution. Sandra tells about her dad helping her with algebra. When he handed her three sheets of paper to show how he arrived at the correct answer, she would explain that was not how she was supposed to do it. Willie's standard answer to that and to many things in life was "That's a dumb way to do it!" Willie had his way of doing things, and believed it was a better way. Often he was right. When calculators became available, Willie got one to take to the stockyard. It was huge and heavy, and it took Willie some time to even trust it. He would use it to get an answer and then he would take his sheets of paper and do it his way to make sure the calculator was right. When computers became popular, son Eddie, who worked in the computer and software field, tried to talk his dad into getting one. Willie just wouldn't go for it. Couldn't see why he needed a computer. One holiday, Willie and Katherine went to visit Sandra's family in Bozeman. His grandsons had just gotten new computer software about flying. After Willie and his grandsons spent some time flying and crashing, Willie and Katherine headed home. Willie stopped in Billings and

bought a computer and software. He called Eddie and told him, and after that Willie became very proficient on his computer, learning all about it and using it to e-mail all the relatives and friends, play games, and tap into its endless source of knowledge for all those projects Willie loved to do. Willie was the type of guy who would study and learn everything he could about whatever he was doing or working on. After educating himself about it as much as he could, he would begin to work to improve it, doing whatever it took to make it better. He was consistent about this in all areas of his life, be it family, farming, ranching, politics, flying, winemaking, community projects. He was always working to make everyone and everything better. And he loved to share his knowledge and ideas with anyone who would listen. His immediate family and the extended family of cousins, nieces and nephews that he kept in touch with, always knew what he was working on, and admired Willie for continuing to learn new things. There were no arguments at the Day house...only debates. Willie loved to debate issues. The most famous were the Texas – Okie ones between Willie and Katherine. If things were too quiet, Willie would instigate a “debate” over something. Didn’t matter what, just something. The only time Willie didn’t debate was at cards and games. Then it was everyone for themselves. It could get brutal. Willie always loved politics. Did I mention he was a Democrat? His entrance into the political arena was spurred on when a local Republican asked him to consider being a candidate for the legislature for their party. Willie didn’t quite know how to handle that. He was a registered Democrat in Oklahoma and knew his family back there would disown him if he went Republican. He mentioned this to a friend, Jim Swanson, also a Democrat. Jim’s eyes lit up and Jim went straight to his party, who also were looking for a candidate. Willie ran on the Democrat ticket for District 54 Representative and served three terms in the Montana State Legislature. Willie loved his time in Helena and learned and contributed much. Willie believed in the party system and always felt that the Democratic party was the “working man’s” party. His family commented that his time in the legislature even gave Willie some culture. He discovered that he didn’t need

to use all the colorful expletives he was so fond of to make a point and voice his opinion. Sandra always called before she voted to get his opinions on the candidates. Willie also had a passion for flying. His family didn't know he was taking flying lessons until he came home after his first solo flight without the back of his shirt. The FFA gave him a lot of trouble over getting licensed because he didn't have full use of his left arm and hand. But he kept after them until he did get that license. He put a runway in by the beet field, with sons, Eddie and Barry packing it down solid. His grandson, Blake, flew and talked flying with his grandpa every chance he got and credits Willie with his choice to make a career as a pilot. Willie would give rides to neighbors and friends and visiting relatives, sometimes mentioning that he should teach them to land in case he had a heart attack in flight and little things like that. Willie loved to tease and get a reaction. On another occasion, Willie got a reaction from family when he went out to visit his daughter Linda and her husband Dave in Oregon. Dave chartered a fishing boat because he knew Willie loved to fish. Family members suggested Willie take something for motion sickness. Willie was indignant, as he had been flying for a hundred years and had never had a problem. After they got out about a mile on the ocean and out of sight of the shore, Willie turned a bright green and fed the fish there and all the way back to shore. Everyone but Willie thought it quite humorous. Willie's latest endeavor was winemaking. His label read Deer Creek Wine –Willie Day, Vintner. He has over 300 bottles of different kinds wine in his basement. Willie was talking about learning to make beer as his next project. At 79, Willie was still a work in progress, challenging himself to learn and do new things. And we can't leave unmentioned all the projects for the community he worked on. He actively served on many boards, and was a driving force on many improvements to our community. He was an instrumental lobbyist for the Veteran's Home located here. It is probably the work he was most proud of, as he had great concern and high regard for veterans. Willie's energy, drive, strong personality, love of life and learning, and his hands-on way of doing

everything, became a life of accomplishments that he, his family, friends and his community can look at with pride. Willie's daughter Sandra has a reading about her Dad that she will share with you after which the family of Willie Day invite you to join them in viewing a video tribute to Willie. Reading : Sandra Video Tribute Celebrant: As we wait for the lights to power up, be aware that at the lunch here in the cafeteria, which follows Willie's committal service, Jim Swanson will introduce some friends who want to share their thoughts about Willie. An opportunity will also be provided for any of you that wish to address Willie's family and friends. At this time, Willie's son, Eddie, will say a few words about his father, followed by Jim Swanson, and Robert Kudrna.

Speakers Celebrant This past year Willie became Katherine's caregiver because of health concerns. As with everything else, Willie educated himself about treatments, care and medications. He knew as much or more about her condition as her doctor. But Katherine's health bothered him a lot, because he couldn't "fix" it. Not only did he take care of Katherine, 24/7, he encouraged and challenged her to stay as active as she could to help herself. Their relationship over the past 63 years has always been special, and time only enhanced that. Katherine talks about how she and Willie worked together to have what they have. He in the fields; she in the house and garden. Katherine says of her 63 years with Willie that they tried to enjoy each other, and he always appreciated her and everything she did. Willie once said that Katherine had raised the family. Willie worked. Linda, Eddie and Barry were the farm and ranch hands, and Sandra was her mother's helper in the house. Willie worked with his children, taught them how to work, expected much, and rewards of praise were few. Willie knew how tough life could be. Willie had a short fuse, and with his colorful language, as Linda put it, Willie would pass out "Scottish blessings" on a regular basis. According to Linda, you could tell when the fuse had run out because his left arm would just start shaking. That was always a good time to let Dad cool down, which he did quickly. Willie was always one to step up to the plate when something was needed for the family. Katherine had some health issues as the kids were growing up, and for a time Willie was in

charge of cooking for the family. The choices were corned beef and eggs that maybe were cooked, and Vienna sausages with beanie weenies. Willie's children have a bit of a problem looking a Vienna sausage in the face. But they never went hungry. Another childhood memory was of traveling to Oklahoma or Texas for a holiday to visit family. Willie and Katherine generally drove straight through, packing bologna sandwiches for the trip. On one such trip, Willie bought a flatbed truck and put the station wagon they had driven down in, on the flatbed to haul it back. The kids rode in the car with instructions to "duck" whenever they met a car or went through a town. It was quite a trip. Willie was a good provider to his family and worked long, hard hours at doing that. Willie would discuss the weather, talk about work, debate politics or share his special interests, but he wasn't one to say "I love you", or give out praise. But his children knew he did love them and he often praised them to others. One legacy to them was his desire to instill in them his philosophy " If you want something badly enough, you can get it." Work hard and do whatever you have to. He said this often and set that example for them with the way he lived his life. Strong personalities can generate conflict, and although this happened between Willie and his children, the deep, and mutual respect between them, ensured resolution of these differences. Willie was immensely proud of his children and his children of him. During the 90's, Barry tried something new with his father, something new, Barry began hugging Willie. Not in public, mind you, there it was a handshake, but in private. At first it was a bit awkward, but they did not stop. And Willie's children noticed that when their father didn't have to work such long hours, he used that time to learn about what they were involved in and their jobs so he could talk to them about what they did. And it gave Willie time to get to know his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and they have great love and admiration for Willie. Danny, who has Willie's name for a middle name, is proud to be his grandfather's namesake. And besides, grandpa told Danny not to tarnish it or he'd kick his butt. His granddaughter, Teresa who Willie walked her down the aisle of her wedding in 1985, is most proud of the way Willie lovingly cared for

her grandmother in their retirement years. Teresa's daughter, Willie's great-granddaughter, Katryce, says "Grandpa Day was very special to Kyle and I. We have many special memories with him. For the past two summers, he and grandma came with us to Medora, ND to see the night show. It was a long trip, but they chose to come with us anyways. Grandpa Day loved us a lot, just like we loved him." Willie never said as much but he seemed to regret not being more involved in raising his children. This next song is for Willie and his kids. Song – Daddy's Hands Celebrant – Closing There is no finer tribute to Willie than the number of people who are here today to honor and remember him. A niece, Berneice Sinor, said that if all the people in Oklahoma, Texas, Oregon, and California that knew and loved Willie could have come today, we would have filled another building. Willie was a presence, a reminder of the joys of an exuberant life, a life filled with many achievements. It is an important day when we stop to bear witness to a person's life and times among us, the difference his living and dying has made among family and community and to take time to express our grief, our hope, our memories. Thank you all for being here for this important time. Willie has touched many lives during his life. Just as each fingerprint is unique, 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. As you are ushered from your seat by our funeral directors, Willie's family invites you to come forward and leave your handprint on Willie's casket to blend together and forever signify the impact and soul print Willie's life has left us. Your handprint is that of friendship in honor of Willie's life and to the belief that " a life shared is a life to never be forgotten."

Tribute Wall



“ *William "Willie" Day*

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