

## Bertyl O'Connor, 106

Bertyl B. O'Connor, 106, a Great Falls native and former resident of Neihart and Whitefish, passed away at Mountain View Manor in Eureka on Nov. 7, 2023.



She is survived by son, Michael (Donelle); grandson, Scott O'Connor (Karla); great-granddaughters, Chelsie and Shelby; great-great-grandson, Asher; former daughter-in-law, June O'Conner (Scott's mother); and several nieces and nephews.

She was born Dec. 14, 1916, in Great Falls, the seventh child of Bart Baker and Stella Willard Baker. She attended the Ursuline Academy through the grades and graduated from Great Falls High School in 1935.

Bertyl married Frank O'Connor of Neihart in August of 1935. During Frank's naval service, she earned a diploma from Northwest Hotel Management and worked in San Francisco.

They owned and operated Bob's Bar in Neihart until 1961, then moved to Whitefish, and then to Las Vegas for two years, managing Lone Palm Motel and Trailer Court. They then moved back to Whitefish. Bertyl retired as housekeeping man-

ager at Ptarmigan Village in 1978.

Frank died shortly after their 58th

wedding anniversary in 1993. At that point, Bertyl moved to Eureka and kept busy at the furniture store and laundromat. She enjoyed cooking and needlework.

She will be remembered as "Blackie," a friendly, thoughtful lady.

She was preceded in death by her husband, parents, seven sisters and a brother.

She was a member of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church. Memorials may be made to a charity of your choice.

She will be buried next to her husband, Frank, at Glacier Memorial Gardens cemetery, with a funeral mass to be held at a later date.

Many thanks to the Mountain View Manor staff for Bertyl's care her last years.

Services are under the care of Schnackenberg Funeral Home of Eureka. Online condolences and memories may be shared by visiting [www.schnackenbergfh.com](http://www.schnackenbergfh.com).

## Mary Lee Oliverson, 80

Mary Lee Oliverson, 80, passed away on Sept. 6, 2023 in Kalispell.



Mary Lee was born on Aug. 3, 1943 to Allen and Willtrude "Billy" (Phipps) Evans, in Windom, Minn., your typical "small town America" setting. It was a Midwestern upbringing that included strong family ties, good old hard work ethic and firm values with regard to right and wrong. She enjoyed a childhood filled with lots of cats, dogs and a home dinner table open to anyone, everyone, any time and

was proud of. After moving to Kalispell, she entered the real estate field,

realizing a loyal clientele for 14 years. Her community commitment included serving on the board of directors for N.W. MT Association of Realtors, board of directors for United Way, board of directors for the Lighthouse Christian Home, Daybreak Rotary Club,

all the time.

Her single years included two years employment at WCCO TV, Minneapolis, amongst the TV personalities and "stars," much excitement for a small-town girl. It's also where she met her future husband. Then on to San Francisco for two years for ABC TV network and the thrill of that city's enchantment. Marrying Jim in 1965 was in her words "the best decision of my entire life," giving her a life companion who brought joy, laughter, friendship, compassion and unconditional acceptance and love on a continual daily basis.

He indeed, was the Love of her life. The gifting of two wonderful sons, Scott and Jason, rounded out their family. In 2015 they celebrated their golden anniversary; at the time of her death, they had been married 58 years.

A clothing design/construction business (House of Lee) kept Mary Lee very busy during the years they lived in Pablo. Beginning with men's handmade neckties and ending that career with women's garments, it became a successful "cottage industry" that she

Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors, Hospice Volunteer, Brendan House and Heritage Place Volunteer, Gemini mentoring program, RSVP cribbage program coach, and the Library Homebound Volunteer Program.

A people person, she loved her many friends and coworkers. The game of golf was her passion. She really believed that "God does not subtract from one's allotted time the hours spent playing golf." So, she played whenever she got the chance!

From her first visit in 1971, Montana became home to her. For other states, she had admiration, respect, recognition, even some affection, but with Montana it was love at first sight. (John Steinbeck)

Her life was richly and well lived, and totally blessed by God.

She asks that any memorials be made to FVCC scholarship program, or to ALERT.

No services are planned at this time. Friends are encouraged to visit [www.buffalohill-fh.com](http://www.buffalohill-fh.com) to leave notes of condolences for the family. Buffalo Hill Funeral Home and Crematory is caring for the family.

## Alvin Phillip Olson, 87

Alvin "Phil" Phillip Olson, 87 of Columbia Falls, passed away Aug. 6, 2023. He was born Sept. 13, 1935, in Fosston, Minnesota, to the late Oliver Olson and Minda Olson (Bjore).

He was a farmer and rancher all his life, at times farming 500-plus acres and running 50 plus cow and calf pairs. His paying job was supervisor of shipping at Plum Creek Lumber Company, where he retired after 37 years of service.

He was always involved in his kids and grandkids lives, as a 4-H leader and mentor. He was neighborly, friendly and ready to lend a helping hand. He was never afraid of a challenge or hard work, more often than not, putting his neighbors and friends needs before his own.



He loved his cows and, more recently, feeding and watching his hummingbirds.

He was a member of the Whitefish Moose Lodge and

was dedicated to the 4-H program. Some of his hobbies included dancing, reading, listening to old country music, visiting with friends and neighbors, playing the fiddle, banjo, accordion, or piano, and watching World War II history or old westerns.

Prior to his marriage to Judy, he proudly served our nation in the U.S. Army, 82nd Airborne Division.

Phil is survived by wife of 60 years, Judy M. Olson (Mork) of Havre; son, Chris Olson of Bremerton, Washington; daughter, Connie Wilkerson (Tim) of Spirit Lake, Idaho; son, Casey Olson of Columbia Falls; daughter, Carol Erickson (Bryan) of Columbia Falls; sister, Mildred Meyers; 11 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; many nieces and nephews.

In addition to his parents, Phil is preceded in death by three brothers and one sister.

Phil's memorial will be a casual potluck harvest dinner at 4 p.m. on Sept. 16, at the Olson family farm, 1781 Conn Road, Columbia Falls.

To send online condolences, please visit [www.columbiamortuary.com](http://www.columbiamortuary.com).



## Bryce Olson, 53



Bryce Olson, 53, caught his "final wave" in Portland, Oregon on July 13, 2023, surrounded by a small group of family and friends following a long and inspiring journey with cancer.

He was born in South Dakota on Jan. 12, 1970, to Steve and Elaine Olson.

He moved to Kalispell in 1978, where he attended school, graduating from Flathead High School in 1988.

He studied International Business at the University of Portland, including time abroad in Osaka, Japan.

While in his freshman year, he had his eye on a young lady in his Introduction to Atmosphere course. He took a leap of faith, sending her a Valentine's Day card to introduce himself.

This was the beginning of a lifelong friendship with Midori Karasawa and following graduation in 1992, Bryce and Midori married.

They spent the next four years living and working in Tokyo, Japan. He read, wrote

the beautiful, strong and independent young lady she has become.

He had a list of friends a mile long. He shared a deep connection with many of his high school buddies who remained in touch over the years.

They enjoyed their reunions and were always able to pick up where they left off, constantly looking for an opportunity to outwit one another with their next practical joke.

He loved dressing up in 80's rock band attire. As a member of the "Five Horsemen" the group would get together on special occasions in some version of Planes, Trains, Automobiles (and helicopters) to celebrate a special birthday, anniversary or class reunion.

An adventure with Bryce was sure to never disappoint and would likely end with an amazing memory and an opportunity to look back

with a warm heart and a laugh.

Aside from being an amazing father, son, brother, friend, surfer and musician, he became a fierce international advocate for genomics-guided precision medicine.

Over recent years, he spoke at many conferences and events around the world, sharing his personal experiences as a means to increase understanding of gene sequencing in cancer treatment.

During this time, Bryce touched the lives of countless people impacted by cancer, buying them valuable time.

His career at Intel included being in various leadership positions in product and marketing and ultimately, spending the last eight years as the Global Marketing Director for the Health and Life Sciences Group.

His position at Intel provided him with the opportunity to enhance collaborations between technology companies and cancer research.

He led global awareness campaigns such as his "Sequence Me" movement to encourage cancer patients to have their cancer tumors sequenced for more targeted treatment.

He started FACTS (Fighting Advanced Cancer Through Songs) to use music as a way to increase awareness about molecular testing and

precision medicine and co-produced an album in 2017, with all proceeds going to his FACTS movement.

In addition, Bryce was instrumental in raising funds to support cancer research and personalized treatment options.

On behalf of Bryce's family and friends, we extend deep gratitude to Bryce's care team over his years of cancer treatment.

Dr. Rana McKay, at the University of California San Diego (UCSD) Health was instrumental in Bryce's care. Using data-driven precision medicine, she connected Bryce to various clinical trials over the years and always left Bryce feeling heard and in control of his medical care.

Over the last few weeks and in his last hours, Signature Hospice brought great physical and emotional comfort to Bryce, as well as his family and friends.

There is a famous quote in life, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but

and spoke fluently in Japanese and continued to enjoy the food, culture and the language after they returned to the states.

They spent time in San Francisco before moving to Portland, Oregon.

It was in 1997 that Bryce began his career at Intel.

In 2000, he transferred to London and spent a year working and traveling in Europe. Bryce was global minded and loved immersing himself in other cultures.

He returned to Portland and remained working at Intel until 2022.

Bryce and Midori welcomed the true joy of their lives, their daughter Devona, in 2008. Bryce was most proud of Devona and happiest when he was spending time with her.

Bryce and Devona were kindred spirits who enjoyed late night television, disliked early mornings and shared a wicked sense of humor.

He loved anything that involved spending time with his daughter. They enjoyed time at their beach house together, surfing, traveling and hitting the slopes.

He never missed an opportunity to watch Devona play soccer and run track and was her biggest fan. He loved watching her grow into

with a warm heart and a laugh.

The only thing that changed over the years amongst those friends was their proximity to one another, the frequency of their time together, the color and amount of hair everyone had, and the addition of a few wrinkles.

However, nothing could change the deep friendship they shared over the years.

As an adult living in Portland, Bryce was fortunate enough to add another group of committed friends.

This group of friends always looked forward to whatever adventure came their way.

It might be piling into a limo with their "press passes" for the evening's concert, a surf trip to Mexico, a shared ski trip, a night heating up the mic for karaoke, or the annual 4th of July parade in Oceanside, looking like they just stepped out of an 80's rock band MTV video.

Music was a cornerstone in Bryce's life and he loved all genres, including alternative, pop, hip hop, rock, country and reggae—which reflected Bryce's innate ability to find connection with anyone or anything.

His "go-to" music, as an 80s kid from small town Montana, was always hair metal, and

people will never forget how you made them feel."

Bryce, you left us all feeling so well loved and so much better off for having known you.

He was preceded in death by his brother, Mark Olson; and his mother, Elaine Redalen Olson.

He is survived by his father, Steve Olson of Kalispell; and his daughter, Devona Olson of Portland, Oregon; along with many aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

His life was a life we all should celebrate. It was fun. It was full. It was intentional. Go forward and leave your mark on this world as though you are Bryce.

There will be a service and luncheon to be held at a later date this fall in Kalispell, with more details to come.

In addition, there will be a Celebration of Life from 6 - 11 p.m. on August 27, at McMenamans Edgefield Blackberry Hall and Meadow in Portland, Oregon.

The event will be epic, just like Bryce.

If you wish to make a memorial donation, they can be made to a GoFundMe account set up to sustain Bryce's Sequence Me campaign. The donation website is <https://gofund.me/fcd54090>.

### Conrad Lovell O'Master, 85

Conrad Lovell O'Master, 85, of Kalispell, passed away on April 2, 2023 at Immanuel Lutheran Home.



He is survived by his wife, Betty A. O'Master; children, Sean, Patrick and Kristina.

Conrad was born on Jan. 19, 1938 to Lovell and Mary (Schievelhut) O'Master in Stockton, California.



He is survived by his wife, Betty A. O'Master; children, Patrick O'Master of Ohio,

Conrad attended school in Stockton. He then went on to serve in the U.S. Navy as master senior chief petty officer and was honorably discharged. He then went on to work for the U.S. Postal Service as a clerk until he retired.

Denise Compton of Tennessee, Annamarie O'Master Akers of Texas, Joseph O'Master of Idaho; step-children Jay Lee, Eric, Ron, Darla and Jaye Lynn; and sisters, Barbara Jean Covion and Mary Ann Wagner.

In 1997, he married Betty Olsen and they celebrated 26 years of marriage. Conrad was a member of the Moose Lodge, VFW and Toys for Tots.

Cremation has taken place and services will be announced at a later date.

He enjoyed fishing, camping, watching westerns on TV and spending time with close friends and family.

Friends are encouraged to visit [www.buffalohillfh.com](http://www.buffalohillfh.com) to leave notes of condolences for the family. Buffalo Hill Funeral Home and Crematory is caring for the family.

Conrad was preceded in death by his parents; brother, Dave; son, Edward; and grandchild,

### Jonathan Oostra, 34

Jonathan Paul Oostra, 34, was born as a preemie on May 30, 1989, in Frankfort, Illinois. He died on Aug. 1, 2023, in Kalispell.



He is survived by parents, Bob and Kathleen Oostra; brothers and sisters, Dan and Summer, Mike and Tina, Matt and Carrie, Rachelle and Paul, Melissa, Bob and Carla, and Charlie. Also many nephews, nieces, friends and other relatives.

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He attended Aletheia Christian Fellowship where he was a part of their church family. It is at Aletheia Christian Fellowship that there will be a memorial at 2 p.m. on Aug. 19, 2023.

His life was lived with smiles, determination and love. He was a Christian who was deter-

mined to follow God's rules. He was an assembler, locksmith and repairman for Montana Ace for seven years. He loved working there and made many friends.



## Ellen M. Opalka, 78

Ellen M. Opalka, 78, died suddenly on June 16, 2023.

She was born on February 18, 1945, to Kenneth and Marguerite Zanto.

She had four brothers and one sister. In 1963, she graduated from high school in Highwood.

She developed her love for teaching, graduating from the University of Montana-Western, in Dillon.

She taught school in Columbia Falls and started her own kindergarten in the basement of her home.

In June of 1973, she married Bruce E. Opalka of Columbia Falls. They were together until Bruce's death in 2009.

They were blessed with two children; Mary Opalka (Jeff LaPlume) and James Opalka (Becky).

She loved her three grandchildren: Elizabeth Powell (Reush), Catherine and Benjamin Opalka. Along with two bonus grandchildren: Madison and Jackson Birdsell.

She was a wonderful cook and baker. She enjoyed trying new recipes and passing on her



baking tips and tricks to friends and family. She took great pride in maintain-

ing her home and home-  
stead.

She was a faithful member of St. Richard's Parish in Columbia Falls for over fifty years. She embraced her Catholic faith reading her bible daily.

She was a very loving, forgiving, kind and compassionate person. Always putting others in front of herself.

She will be truly missed. Matthew 5:1-12a "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven."

A Vigil Service with Rosary will be held at 6 p.m., on Thursday, June 29, at Columbia Mortuary. Funeral Mass will be celebrated at 2 p.m., Friday, June 30, at St. Richard Catholic Church. With a Graveside Committal at St. Richard Cemetery with reception to follow.

Columbia Mortuary, in Columbia Falls, is caring for the family.

## Denis E. Otten, 70

Denis E. Otten, 70, grew up in Fort Peck, hunting and fishing with his dad. That turned into a lifelong passion for the outdoors.

On the evening of Aug. 1, 2023, he was preparing his boat to go fishing and passed peacefully under the rising of a super moon while the aurora borealis danced overhead.

He left behind his wife, Anita, of 33 years; four children; seven grandsons; three great; and many friends who mourn the loss.



He was an active member of Alcoholics Anonymous for 38 years. AA was

a very important part of his life.

Please join us in the celebration of Denis's life where we will have a potluck and share stories. We will meet at 12:30 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 13, at the large pavilion in Woodland Park in Kalispell.