



On Sunday, April 26, 2009, Verne Klingensmith, 78, died peacefully, after a long struggle with pulmonary fibrosis, surrounded by family and close friends. He joined the Grand Reunion—he had hoped for over a long period of time—of parents, grandparents, other family members, and friends.

Verne was born in La Crosse, Wisconsin, September 12, 1930 and lived in St. Paul, Minnesota, until age six when he and his parents moved to North St. Paul. There he attended grade school and graduated from high school. Living in the backwash of the great depression seemed difficult at the time. He worked in the family garden, pulled quack grass from thorny rose bushes, sold fresh vegetables, and later greeting cards—all done with minimal whining. After all, it was a family team effort....and they got through these hard times together. “Looking back, those were good times; we pulled together in the same harness, got our jobs done and survived, better for the experience.” For four winters they lived in a small home. They carried kerosene for the space heater, split wood for the kitchen stove, and carried water from a neighbor’s home one block away. They had an air-conditioned, automatic toilet, no flushing necessary. In winter it was “a cool feature!” While living here, Pal, his special dog friend, and he wandered the nearby fields together. He built and flew big six-cornered kites with Daddy’s help and tiny kites made with toothpicks and tissue paper. He also built a “tree house” in a boxelder tree.

Verne was a junior air raid warden during World War II, a Boy Scout, and played trombone in the Senior High band starting in the 6th grade. His dad passed away when he was 14 years old—it was back to difficult times. Paper routes, a job in the local 5 and 10 store clerking, stocking and tending the coal-fired furnace, sweeping the floors, and shoveling snow occupied his time. The bright spot for Verne was driving the boss’s car to get freight at the depot. He also delivered the special delivery mail for the Post Office on his bicycle. Santa brought the bike earlier, but Verne paid for half of it from his savings.

In High School he was a Thespian, taking a lead part in the stage play, “Little Women.” He also acted in several one-act plays.

The high school band years were good. He was president of the band. Thanks to Palmer Rauk, the band director, he was given the opportunity to be assistant band director and to lead the band in a local street parade. Mr. Rauk also referred him to the first chair trombonist of the Minneapolis Symphony for further instruction. Verne provided solo trombone music at his class graduation.

He attended the University of Minnesota, first majoring in music education and later in business administration. Verne played first trombone in the 135-member University of Minnesota marching band.

In 1952, he joined the 3M company; he worked there for 26 years. He eventually became a marketing manager in the international division. He traveled overseas for 12 years, promoting product programs and seeing much of God’s creation in 60 different markets. He had a heart attack on the ship between Stockholm and Helsinki in 1976, left the international division, and joined the corporate staff marketing planning group as an instructor.

During the 3M years he played in the 3M Scotsmen 15-piece big dance band performing the music of Glen Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, and other popular big band arrangements. What a marvelous experience!

In 1978 he resigned from 3M, relocated to Bozeman with his family, and bought an insulation contracting company. He sold this company in 1985 and moved to Helena with his wife, Rita Charles. Verne was a Realtor with Century 21 before retiring in 1996. During this time in Bozeman, he was an avid hunter of elk, deer, and sage hens. He said it didn’t matter if he did not bag an animal, it was just great to be in the mountains. He fondly remembers one special year hunting with his son.

In 1987 he was separated from Rita, the mother of his three children, and returned to Bozeman. In 1990 he married Roxanne Smith, who was a long-time friend whom he had met some years earlier while attending St. James Episcopal Church. Roxanne was the love of his life and they shared 18 years of a loving partnership. They shared their love with Verne’s three children and Roxanne’s daughter, Melissa Reid, son-in-law, Howard, and granddaughter, Sylvie.

Verne was an active member and Senior Warden at St. Alban’s Episcopal Church in Edina, Minnesota. He helped lead the congregation through a time of designing and preparing to build a new sanctuary. He was a Junior Warden at St. James, Bozeman, a long-term Vestry member and chairman of the Action Plan Visioning Task Force. In 1990, he joined the board of directors of Habitat for Humanity and was the construction supervisor for the second Habitat home built in Bozeman. He also served two terms on the Bozeman City Affordable Housing Advisory Board. He was a Scottish Rite 32nd degree Mason and belonged to Osman, Albedo, and Algeria Shrine temples where he played in the band or sang in the chorus.

Verne’s smiling face, sense of humor, incredible wisdom, and gracious style will be missed. He was an honest businessman and had the courage of his convictions.

Verne leaves his angel wife, Roxanne; and his loving children, Kent Charles (Wand) Klingensmith of Eden Prairie, Minnesota, Lori Ann Matthews of Livingston, Montana, and Heidi Jo (Charlie) Hamp of Broomfield, Colorado; four grandchildren, Daniel Charles Klingensmith, (Kent) Connor Matthews, (Lori) Shannon and Henry Hamp (Heidi); cousins, Carol Waller of Stewart, Minnesota and Veva Woller of Hutchinson, Minnesota, Paul Klingensmith, Correctionville, Iowa; and many good friends who were very supportive during his last years of life. He was very grateful for the excellent care he received from Bozeman Deaconess Hospice and his many friends at St. James Episcopal Church.

A memorial service will be held at 11:00 A.M. Saturday, May 2, at St. James Episcopal Church on the corner of Tracy and Olive. To celebrate Verne’s life, the family would request that friends wear bright and colorful clothes. Additional parking for the service will be available at Dokken-Nelson.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in Verne’s name to St. James Episcopal Church in Bozeman. He asks that this wish be honored by all who knew and loved him.

“Praise be to our Lord for the Grand Reunion....until we all meet again, peace and love be with each one of you.”