



E. Fred (Fritz) Kessler

April 20, 1915 ~ May 27, 2010

E. Fred (Fritz) Kessler passed away in Bozeman on May 27, 2010. He was born to Bertha Sieg Kessler and Conrad Kessler on April 20, 1915, in Three Forks, Montana. The family ran a dairy farm and moved from Trident to Belgrade and then to Bozeman.

While attending Trident school he was voted to have the "Biggest Smile." He later attended the Rae school and graduated from Gallatin County High School in 1933.

In the early 1930's, while his father was visiting with the owner of Quality Market, Ike Brady, Mr. Brady said, "Bottle up some of that white stuff and we'll see if we can sell it." That was the beginning of the Kessler Dairy in Bozeman. In 1937, Fritz and his two brothers, Paul and Arnie, purchased the business from their parents. At that time the dairy was located at 708 West Main (current home of Bagel Works) and later moved to 803 North Wallace.

When WWII started in 1941 he had his private pilot's license, his own plane, and enough hours of flying time to enroll in a flight instructor's program at Belgrade. He joined the Army Reserves and received his commercial instructor's rating. After one year, he became Chief Pilot in Spokane in conjunction with Gonzaga University. In 1944, he joined the Army Air Corps as a pilot. He flew numerous planes including: BT-13, C-47, B-25, A-26, A-20, and his favorite the P-38. Towards the end of the war he was stationed in Cairo, Egypt, preparing to fly fuel over "The Hump." He was very proud to serve his country and he was appreciative of his brothers, Paul and Arnie, for running the business during his absence.

In 1946, he returned to Bozeman and married the love of his life, Lillian Marie Johnson. Together, they had four children, Debbie Graf (Gene), Karlyn Urdahl (Rick), Fred Kessler, and Ginnie Daws (Brad). He continued with the dairy business until it was sold in 1973. Simultaneously, he ran Surge Dairy Supply which he sold to his son in 1977. He was a faithful servant of First Lutheran Church and was active in his community serving as President of Kiwanis, a member of Toastmasters, the American Legion, and a Bobcat Booster. He was instrumental in providing fun for his family because of his hobbies including ice skating, camping, skiing, boating, and fishing. And at the age of 80, he water skied at Ennis Lake.

In retirement Fritz and Lillian enjoyed traveling and 25 years of golfing in Mesa, AZ. During this time they made many wonderful friends.

He was always thankful to his parents for a Christian upbringing.

He is survived by his immediate family, sister, Ruth; brothers, Arnie and Paul; 11 grandchildren; 12 great grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews whom he prayed for regularly.

He was preceded in death by his parents; sisters, Vee and Mart; brothers, Herman and Ernie; an infant son; and daughter-in-law, Phyllis Kessler (Kingma).

Dad, we love you and will miss you. We thank you for your loving guidance, and in the end all of your family is a living legacy of how you lived your life.

Memorials may be made to First Lutheran Church Building Fund, 222 South Black, Bozeman, MT 59715 or to the Gallatin Historical Society & Pioneer Museum, 317 West Main Street, Bozeman, MT 59715.