



Lee was born February 24, 1923, in Bozeman, to Harry and Lela McMilin. He spent most of his life in the Gallatin Valley. He spent time during the Depression in Missouri with his parents, but returned to Bozeman, graduating from Gallatin High in 1942. He enlisted in the Navy, and served the remaining years of WWII in the South Pacific. He married Betty Minder, while home on leave, in 1943. They had two children, Connie (Joe) Bennett and Jim (Vickie). They had four beloved grandchildren, Lonnie and Wade Bennett and families, Heather and Ross McMilin.

After the war ended in 1945, Lee returned to Belgrade. He opened a small grocery store, which later became Lee & Dad's, after his Dad (Harry) joined him in the business. After Jim's graduation from high school, he and Lee became partners. At a later time, Dan Gustafson joined the partnership.

Lee was a very active member of the Belgrade community. He enjoyed sports, playing on a baseball team and traveling with the Belgrade High basketball team as a chaperone, in the early years. He was a member of many local organizations, including the Commercial Club, where he helped start Fall Festival and the world famous BBQ. He served as councilman and mayor of Belgrade.

Fishing and boating were a big part of Lee's life. He was a member of the original group at Goose Bay. Saturday night, after the store closed, he loaded his camper on the delivery truck and pulled his boat to Canyon Ferry. Sunday night, he drove home and unloaded it, so it would be ready for Monday deliveries. In later years, he and Betty enjoyed spending time at the lake with their grandchildren. They credit Granddad with making them mariners. After retirement in 1978, he and Betty traveled and loved wintering in Yuma, Arizona, until her death in 1991.

Lee had so many special qualities. He was a gentleman, with the ability to make everyone feel special. He was never judgmental. He had humor, wit and loved to dance.

He married Marilyn, a family friend, in 2000. They spent their summers in the Gallatin Valley and their winters in Yuma. The last few years were spent at their home in Belgrade, along with Casper, their furry companion. Lee was loved by Marilyn and her extended family.

Lee's family will gather for a celebration of his life. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests a donation, in his name, to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Memories and Honors, P.O. Box 1000, Dept. 142, Memphis, TN 38148-0142 or the charity of your choice.