

Thomas Lawrence Ellis, 80, a well-known Conrad farmer, passed away on June 2, 2008 at the Highgate Memory Cottage in Bozeman, Montana, due to complications of Alzheimer's disease.

A vigil service will be held Thursday June 5, at 7 p.m. at the Pondera Funeral Home in Conrad. Funeral Mass will be celebrated Friday June 6, at 10:30 a.m. at St. Michaels's Catholic Church in Conrad, with burial in Mount Olivet Cemetery. Pondera Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

Survivors include children and spouses, Laura and Art Westwell of Clarks Summit, PA, Tom and Charlotte Ellis of Helena, MT, Betty Ellis and partner Larry Hill of Spokane, WA, Larry and Joan Ellis of Washougal, WA., Kathleen and Victor VanHorn of Sparks, NV, Chris and Judy Ellis of Conrad, and Pat and Susan Ellis of Bozeman; a sister, Loretta Lennox of Seattle; grandchildren and spouses Ian and LaDonna Schneller of Odenton, MD., Rachel Schneller of Duties, VA., Michael Schneller of Roseburg, OR., Amy and Tim Dilworth of Sandpoint, ID., Matthew Ellis of Washougal, WA., Victor, Justin, and Christine VanHorn of Sparks, NV., Lisa and Kyle Ellis of Conrad, great-grandchildren Cole and Carson Schneller (Ian), Hayden, Noah and Kylie Dilworth (Amy) and Hailey Krebsbach (Justin VanHorn).

His wife of 59 years, Helene Whitney Ellis, sister Valeria Irvin, and parents John Harry Ellis and Gertrude Loney preceded him in death.

Tom was born on September 4, 1927 in Conrad, Montana to John Harry and Gertrude Loretta (Sturgeon) Ellis and lived in Dupuyer from birth until 1937, when he and his sisters moved to Conrad and were raised by their grandmother, Loretta Rives, at the Conrad Hotel. He considered "Granny" to be his inspiration and hero and modeled her strength and wisdom with his children.

Tom and Helene Adelaide Whitney were married in 1945 and farmed west and east of Conrad for almost 50 years until their move to the Waterford Retirement Home in Helena in 2003. After Helene's death in 2004, he lived at the Pondera Nursing Home for a year and moved into the Memory Cottage at the Highgate in the fall of 2005. Tom was an avid hunter and fisherman and loved to water and snow ski, especially with his kids. He and Helene enjoyed traveling in their retirement years.

Tom was a graduate of Carroll College and together with Helene established a permanent endowment for business scholarships. From 1970-74, he served on the Pondera, Toole County planning committee during the missile build up and was appointed by Governor Judge to the Governors Council on Better Government. Tom served on the Board of the Farmer's State Bank (now Stockman's Bank) in Conrad from 1970-2000, was active in the March of Dimes during the 1950's and 60's, was an organizer of the Horizon Lodge in Conrad and served in the U.S. Army at the close of World War II in 1945. During his high school summers, he was a welder in the ship building plant in Vancouver, WA.

Memorials may be made to Rocky Mountain Hospice: 301 Edelweiss Dr. Suite 5 & 6, Bozeman MT, 59718 and The Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter: 1549 East Cameron Bridge Road Bozeman, MT 59718.