

Eugene "Gene" Black, 87, a loving and loyal son, husband, father, grandfather, uncle, and friend, passed away peacefully on Sunday, August 8, 2010, in Bozeman, Montana.

He was born on April 1, 1923 at the Beer Mug Ranch in Difficulty, Wyoming to William and Hertha (Wendelburg) Black. He spent his childhood and school years in Blackwell, Oklahoma.

During his first semester of college at Oklahoma A&M, he joined the U.S. Air Force and became a pilot. During WWII, he was an instructor on the Douglas A26 Invader. In 1945, he was hired to fly for Western Airlines, which merged with Delta Airlines in 1987. Captain Black retired in 1988 after 42 years as a highly respected commercial airline pilot. During his first year with Western Airlines, he met a lovely stewardess, Eris Bea Brady, who became his wife of almost 63 years. After the birth of their two daughters in Denver, CO, he was recalled by the Air Force for the Korean War and flew 52 missions as a squadron commander on the Martin B26 Marauder Bomber receiving multiple honors and medals including the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After the war and during the rest of his piloting career, he lived with his family in Denver, CO, Corona del Mar, CA, Honolulu, HI, and Bozeman, MT; spending many summers in West Yellowstone, MT. Gene was a country boy and outdoorsman at heart. He was an Eagle Scout. He loved farming and ranching, fishing, bird hunting, gardening, golfing, skiing, and glider flying. He enjoyed playing bridge and poker, racquetball, and tennis. He was a great all around handyman and mechanic, and especially took pleasure and pride in his yard work. He loved his wife and family, friends, and faithful dogs. Gene was a member of Kiwanas, Riverside Country Club since 1982, and belonged to the Elk's for 34 years. He shared his love for flying and worldwide travel with his family and close friends.

Gene was a true gentleman, respected and loved for his honesty, kindness, generosity, helpfulness, sense of humor, and strength of character. He will be remembered and missed by many.

Gene was preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by his wife, Bea, of Bozeman; daughters, Bonnie (Phil) Maurer of Wilsall; Vickie (Larry) Minkoff of Bozeman; grandchildren, Bill (Marcia) Leach of Bozeman, Alisha (John) Boston of LaQuinta, CA, and Ryan and Evan Minkoff of Bozeman.

Special thanks to the staff at Cottonwood Case Management, Hospice of Southwest Montana, Highgate, and Spring Creek Memory Care.

Memorial services will be held at Dokken-Nelson Sunset Chapel on Sunday, August 22, at 2 p.m. A Celebration of Gene's life will immediately follow the service. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Alzheimer's Research Foundation or Bozeman Deaconess Foundation for Hospice of Southwest Montana.

