



**J**ames Howard Thormod Berg, 87, departed this life Sept. 6, 2010 in Bozeman.

Jim was born in Lewistown, Montana, Dec. 1, 1922, to Ingartha (Thormodsgaard) and Oswald Berg. He grew up on the upper Musselshell near Lennep on the family ranch where his grandfather, J.O. Berg had homesteaded in 1890. His idyllic childhood on the ranch suddenly changed when his mother died at the birth of her fourth child in 1931. Jim, brother, Oswald Jr., and sister, Marion, along with baby, Lois Marie, were sent to Bozeman to be schooled and to live with their mother's sister, Martha and A.K. Carlson, while Oswald struggled in the midst of the depression to keep the ranch afloat.

Summers were always spent ranchside, and the Berg kids formed many memories playing along the river, horseback, or accompanying their father and the herders on sheep drives to Kings Hill (and later the Sixteen country). Evenings, under the influence of Oswald, were spent immersed in music. All learned an instrument and sang. Jim soon was a skilled trumpet player. He graduated from Gallatin County high school in 1940 and as was family tradition, went off to St. Olaf College in Minnesota. He was amazed by the musical talent at the Lutheran school and told of making the St. Olaf band as last chair trumpet and the next year being first chair at Montana State College. During his time at MSC, he became reacquainted with the girl with the beautiful soprano voice he'd noticed in high school, Ruth Hoey. In 1943 they were united in a marriage that would last 60 years. They moved back to the Lennep ranch and began a long career in the livestock business. Daughter, Connie, and son, Richard (Rick), were born in those first five years. Jim also played in a dance band

with George Voldseth and Ole and Eloise Sondeno. Saturday nights often found the "EverReady Orchestra" playing for a dance somewhere in central Montana. At home, in those pre-TV days, there was always a 78 playing Louis Armstrong, Tommy Dorsey, or Harry James.

Jim was civic minded serving on committees for Farm Bureau and MT Stockgrowers, school board, church councils, and mentored a lot of kids in his many years as a 4-H leader.

He was a hands on rancher - driven, often obsessed with getting the work done and done right. He could be difficult to work for, but as the ranch transitioned from sheep to cattle and horses to tractors, his high standards were evident. In 1983, he handed over management of the ranch to the fourth generation, his son, Rick.

Ruth and Jim traveled extensively, usually to somewhere with a beach. In 1981, they bought a home in Mesa, AZ where they spent the next 20 winters. Ruth, her last few years spent in the lost world of dementia, died in 2003. Struggling without his beloved companion, Jim spent four years near his daughter in Montrose, CO. In 2009, with much help from many, he spent a meaningful last summer on the ranch. With the cheerful and compassionate caregivers at "Elsie's Assisted Living" in Belgrade, Jim's last year was one of peace and contentment.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Oswald and Ingartha; stepmother, Lois; wife, Ruth; brother, Ozzie; and sister, Lois Marie Irion. Jim is survived by sister, Marion (Palmer) Larson of Portland, OR; daughter, Connie (Don) Stoutt of Montrose, CO; son, Rick (Gayle) Berg of Lennep, MT; grandchildren include: John (Jenn) Bakken of Salt Lake City, David Bakken of Denver, Kari (Charlie) Marks of Lennep, Solveig (Pat) Munson of Ft. Benton, and six great-grandchildren: Nick, Mariah, Grey, Kellen, Claire, and Graham.

A memorial service will be held at 10:30 a.m., Monday, September. 13<sup>th</sup> at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lennep, MT.

Should friends desire, memorials may be made to Trinity Lutheran Church, c/o John Grande, Treasurer, 148 Grande Road, Martinsdale, MT 59053.