



Ralph M. Bendickson

August 4, 1918 - July 3, 2015

On August 4, 1918, in Cooperstown, North Dakota, a son, the youngest of five children, was born to Norwegian immigrants Mattias and Anna (Ericksen) Bendickson. Outside the small town hospital Model T's sat idle next to horses and buggies tied to a post. On July 3, 2015 a NASA space probe continued enroute to Pluto as Ralph Milton Bendickson took his final breath while in the loving presence of his daughter and son. In between those two dates is a 97 year life story much larger than can be encapsulated by an obituary.

Ralph grew up along the banks of the Cheyenne River during the height of the Depression at the family wheat farm. As a boy he trapped skunks, shot prairie dogs and skied to the one room school house. When he was a little boy he thrilled at receiving an apple and a pencil for Christmas, it was all the family of seven could afford. The boy had a kind heart and marveled gentle nature of the family's draft horses. His first car was a stripped down Model T with an apple box for a seat. To combat the overwhelming boredom of the prairie winters he spun doughnuts in the barnyard. When he was old enough he hopped a train and headed west to Glacier Montana where he joined the CCC's. In the C's he became a cook, enjoyed learning how to box and he explored Glacier National Park.

Always the instigator Ralph later returned home and convinced his older brother Milo to venture westward with him via freight train. Caught by a Great Northern Railroad bull, Ralph was physically escorted off a freight train in Whitefish, MT and sternly instructed to "Go back to the farm!" Such a choice

was not possible as it would represent failure in the eyes of the intrepid young brothers. They soon caught another freight train and continued onward, arriving in Wenatchee in July of 1939. Their first bath in Wenatchee was in the Columbia River underneath the Apple Valley Loop Trail Pedestrian Bridge. The brothers dined at Tex & Alice's shack town restaurant and soon found employment picking fruit. In 1939 the Arrow Tavern sold a hamburger and a cold beer for 25 cents.

Ralph and Milo soon worked in the woods for a high-balling gypo logging outfit from Ardenvior; Martin Peterson Logging Co. Working in the woods the two brothers became friends with Norwegian brothers Magnus and Hermod Bakke with whom they enjoyed their first language and shared silly jokes in between the physical efforts of falling trees with crosscut saws and limbing fallen trees with a double-bit axe. The money was good and the two boys were really cutting the mustard. It was time for a boat.

Ralph loved Lake Chelan. He became Lake Chelan Yacht Club's youngest member in 1942, rarely missing a Yacht Club dance and buying his first boat despite the fact that he would have to make time payments. Ralph's first boat was a mahogany runabout, hand built in Wenatchee by Lyle Mrachek, it was appropriately named "Care Free." At the time his was the second fastest boat on the lake and was powered by a flathead V8 which snapped to life early summer mornings with a crisp bark echoing across the water announcing to the world that Ralph was awake and something fun was about to begin.

Ralph Bendickson had three speeds: Fast-forward, faster-forward and Look Out! He's Lost Control! Ralph lost control of loaded logging trucks on three separate occasions yet walked away each time only slightly the worse for wear. While working in the woods Ralph received a skull fracture from a falling tree snag. Later he nearly lost his right hand when a split rim popped off and drove itself into the back of his right hand. While in the hospital Ralph became friends with Confluence Medical Center's three founding doctors who would come to his room sit down at his bed to eat their lunch, listen to the noon news on dad's radio, discuss world events and give him best possible care. It

was our dad's misadventures that fostered a lifetime of genuine respect and appreciation for nurses and caregivers. His always present sense of appreciation endeared him to those who kept him happy to his last days.

And the railroad bull who tossed Ralph off the train in Whitefish? He was from the Entiat Valley. His daughter would later bring Ralph home with her to join them at the Roundy family's dinner table. The reunion between authority and the unstoppable rascal gave Ralph Bendickson a lifetime of happy chuckles. Not only had Ralph made it to Wenatchee, he made his way into the Roundy family home for dinner, with a smile.

Like all Norwegians (and the exceptionally sharp Swede), Ralph was acutely aware of the obvious. He concluded that logging was dangerous. To save his neck he wisely sought other employment. He became a grease monkey at North Central Chevrolet, he drove freight truck for Wenatchee Oroville Freight Lines, he was hired to liquidate FMC's local John Bean Speed-sprayer retail operation. Ralph became employed at Wells and Wade Hardware where he delivered heating oil, worked on the shipping dock, worked in the sporting goods department and then landed in the pump department to discover what would become his life's work.

Somewhere in all of this adventure Ralph met and fell in love with Mildred Emerson at a dance in Entiat. They married in 1948 and enjoyed 34 years together before she was passed away in 1982. The couple had two children; a fireball daughter named Sherry and then after 8 years of careful planning, a baby boy whom they chose to call "Bruce" - most of the time. With a nudge of courage from his wife Mildred, Ralph opened Bendickson Pump and Irrigation in 1957, a regional irrigation supply and installation firm, which he owned and operated successfully until selling out and retiring in 1981. Those were some of the most rewarding years of his life; everything fit and he had a purpose. In his later years Ralph retired to his waterfront home on the south shore of Lake Chelan and severely punished fish anytime a co-conspirator blinked.

Ralph loved boating, fishing, camping, hunting, skiing, cooking, carving and action in general. In his 70's he purchased a D8 Caterpillar to help combat boredom while in his 80's he purchased a backhoe. In his mid-80's the words "Now, my long term plan is to..." made his son grin at the joyous absurdity of a positive attitude. He was an elderly dynamo. A 16 year old kid with 90 some years of experience who periodically drove his only son into periods of self-medication and "Why Me?" counseling sessions with friends, relatives, homeless people and dumb animals.

Ralph Bendickson is survived by daughter Sherry (Mike) Dodson and grandson Jonah. He is also survived by son Bruce (Mary Jo) Bendickson, special friend Eleta Jagow-Bendickson, numerous nieces and nephews and a legion of happy people, young and old, whom Ralph Bendickson made laugh and smile. From son and daughter: special thanks to Jeril Hansen and the outstanding staff of Riverwest Assisted Living who cared for Ralph and his family during his final months, days and hours.

A memorial service celebrating the wonderful life of Ralph Bendickson will be held at a later date, TBA. Memorials honoring Ralph Bendickson can be made to the charity of your choice, as long as you do so with a smile and a happy heart.

"I've never been stuck! Only temporarily detained." – Ralph M. Bendickson
Please express your thoughts and memories on the online guest book at jonesjonesbetts.com. Arrangements are by Jones & Jones-Betts Funeral Home.

Tribute Wall



“ Jones & Jones - Betts Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Ralph M. Bendickson



Jones & Jones~Betts Funeral Home - October 08, 2015 at 11:12 AM

SC

“ I loved the tribute to Ralph which accurately described his life and attitudes. I'm so grateful for the time I got to spend at Lake Chelan with Sherry and Ralph. The days we spent heading up the lake were unforgettable. And there was always good food and wine to be had. Ralph's sense of humor had me laughing whenever I saw him and he always great stories to tell. The world will be a quieter place without Ralph in it.

Sahron Cheney - July 23, 2015 at 06:07 PM

SM

“ Sherry, I enjoyed reading about your dad in the Wenatchee World. He has left you with a lot of wonderful memories.
Sue Marshall, medical librarian

Sue Marshall - July 14, 2015 at 06:21 PM

DW

“ *Dirk Williams lit a candle in memory of Ralph M. Bendickson*



dirk williams - July 13, 2015 at 10:47 AM

DW

“ *my father (RonnieR Williams worked for ralph at pump & irrigation until my father passed when I was at age 4-as I grew I had questions that my mother couldn't answer as to who my father was as a man ,a worker, a friend and all around human being. I use to stop at Ralph s home on sunset st when walking home from jr high at orchard school and have long talks about my dad and life in general- never planned on staying long but ended up there for quite awhile. I appreciate the fact that whatever I asked Ralph -he gave it to me short and straight. truly sad at his passing-another memory fading-but never gone
SEE YA LATER RALPH ----
Dirk Williams*

dirk williams - July 13, 2015 at 10:46 AM

GW

“ *I met Ralph 40 years ago when my father leased orchards from him and later on worked on his motorcycles & snowmobiles for him i always liked to talk to him and listen to his stories.He was a true one of a kind*

Greg Wilhite - July 09, 2015 at 02:02 AM