

Ralph David Keffeler

Ralph David Keffeler was born in Sturgis, SD, on January 22, 1937, to John and Mary (Grubl) Keffeler. He attended school through the 8th grade at the Lower Alkali School. Later, he worked hard, studying on the floor with the kids to obtain his GED.

Ralph married Betty Ann Harwood on June 10, 1957, at the St. Francis of Assisi Church in Sturgis. The first year and a half that they were married, he worked at the Homestake Mine in Lead, SD. Eventually, they moved out to the John D. Keffeler ranch to carry on the heritage and the tradition of being a farmer and a rancher.

Ralph was a great farmer and took extreme pride in his crops. Like all farmers, he didn't think he had enough horse power to pull the bigger equipment. He hooked 2 M's together to pull the 24 ft "one-ways" while sitting on and driving the back M. He later regretted not patenting the idea.

Ralph loved to see how tall his sorghum could grow. One year it grew so tall, when Doug and John went to start cutting the sorghum in Ralph's John Deere, the 4010 completely disappeared except for the exhaust pipe on top. Ralph was a farmer through and through just like his dad taught him. His only stipulation was; "If it wasn't "Green" it wasn't worth bringing home." Including, Betty's garden tractor. (She did come home with a red one.)

As a rancher, Ralph began his first cattle herd with the traditional Herefords with heifers from his dad's herd. Later in years, Ralph fell in love with the Charolais breed. He was often heard to say, "You never lose a Charolais calf, because you had to be with the mother cows all the time during calving season." When the market switched to Angus, Ralph did not give up on his Charolais cows, but did concede to Angus bulls.

Ralph took a lot of pride in his brand and the quality of his herd. Branding at the Keffeler ranch was always a fun day full of family and friends working together. He enjoyed the story telling and seeing his brand on his calves. In the fall when the calves went to the sale barn, Ralph had a good reputation with the cattle buyers of having uniformed and quality calves.

Ralph took flying lessons where he eventually soloed. Unfortunately, he scared himself and quit flying as a pilot. One of his greatest joys was riding as a gunner for Dewey Rathke and Roger Hlavka hunting for coyotes or whatever else they could scare up. Ralph could never understand why Betty was so worried every time he went flying.

What Ralph cherished most in life was family and doing things together as a family. Whether it was a drive through Spearfish Canyon, or pulling the kids out of school to go snowmobiling in the hills as long as it was family time together. Whenever there was a country dance out to Union Center or Opal, they all loaded up in the car and away they went. He loved going to the dances, but didn't necessarily like to dance until after a drink or two.

In his younger years, he was quite the prankster, especially with the kids and grandkids. The kids learned, who sat next to him, to be aware of the gravy being served up the arm versus on the potatoes. Scaring the grandkids that Bear Butte was a volcano and could erupt anytime was another one of his many pranks.

Everyone who knew Ralph knows how much he loved to visit and tell stories. He never met a person he didn't like or visit with. The boyfriends the girls brought home to meet the parents were warned that they will be sitting at the kitchen table for hours listening to Ralph's stories. Stories now, the family will forever treasure.

Ralph David Keffeler, 82, Sturgis, died Friday, March 1, 2019, at Sturgis Regional Hospital.

He is survived by his wife, Betty Ann (Harwood) Keffeler; daughters, Linda (Mike) Howie, White Owl, SD, Donna Keffeler, Littleton, CO, and Tammy (Scott Sieler) Lorenz, Alkali, SD; son, Travis Keffeler, Alkali, SD; daughter-in-law, Shari Keffeler, Alkali, SD; grandchildren, Tanna (Vince) Holzer, Rapid City, SD, Tyrell Lorenz, Alkali, SD, John D. Keffeler, Alkali, SD, Monique Antunovich, Littleton, CO, and Gianna Antunovich, Littleton, CO; great-grandson, Zakary Joseph; 3 sisters, Mabel (Donald) McPherson, Rose Marie "Pickles"(Kenny) VanSickle, and Irene (Benny) Long; and a brother, Murrin Keffeler.

Ralph was preceded in death by his parents, John and Mary (Grubl) Keffeler; son, Douglas Keffeler; infant daughter, Karen; grandsons, Trent Howie and Anthony Howie; four brothers; and three sisters.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Shriners Hospital.

Condolences may be sent to the family at www.kinkadefunerals.com



In Loving Memory

Ralph David Keffeler

January 22, 1937 ~ March 1, 2019

The family invites you to join them for fellowship and lunch at the Sturgis Armory following the committal service. We thank you for your presence and condolences.



He is gone

You can shed tears that he is gone
 Or you can smile because he has lived
 You can close your eyes and pray that he will come back
 Or you can open your eyes and see all that he has left
 Your heart can be empty because you can't see him
 Or you can be full of the love that you shared
 You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
 Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday
 You can remember him and only that he is gone
 Or you can cherish his memory and let it live on
 You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
 Or you can do what he would want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on

David Harkin



In Memory Of **Ralph David Keffeler**

Date of Birth

January 22, 1937
 Sturgis, South Dakota

Date of Death

March 1, 2019
 Sturgis, South Dakota

Funeral Service

Friday, March 8, 2019, at 1:00 p.m.
 Sturgis Armory
 Sturgis, South Dakota

Clergy

Pastor Harold Delbridge

Musician

Danny Chapman

Musical Selections

"Country Roads"
 "Go Rest High On That Mountain" "You're My Best Friend"
 "Lord I Hope This Day Is Good"

Pallbearers

Hime Bourk ~ John Meirose ~ Lloyd Wheeler ~ Scott Sieler
 Mike Howie ~ Troy Lorenz ~ Tyrell Lorenz ~ John Keffeler
 Tanna and Vincent Holzer ~ Monique and Gianna Antunovich
 Tony Howie ~ Trent Howie

Honorary Pallbearers

Bill Gifford ~ Brook Loobey

Place of Interment

Bear Butte Cemetery
 Sturgis, South Dakota