



Curtis N. "Swede" Larson

April 10, 1929 - December 13, 2016

Born April 10, 1929, Curtis N. "Swede" Larson grew up on the family homestead in the Washington Parish of Northwood, North Dakota, as the youngest child of Gustav and Anna (Hanson) Larson. The farm had been homesteaded by his Norwegian immigrant grandparents who crossed the prairies in a buggy. The family farmhouse was built next the site of the original sod home, which was later used as the farm's root cellar. Sundays were an all-day affair at the Washington Lutheran church. Services were held in Norwegian and followed by church suppers where lutefisk, lefse, and other traditional dishes were served at dinners, organized by his grandmother, Lena and the women of the parish.

In his school years, he was often taken to the one-room schoolhouse by his father, in a horse-drawn sleigh. Curtis didn't have the opportunity to play sports, as there were not enough kids in school for a team and most of them were his younger cousins. Growing up on the farm, he spent his free time hunting, fishing, Nordic skiing, swimming and learned taxidermy by taking mail-order lessons from the Northwest School of Taxidermy. Some examples of his taxidermy work remain on display in the biology department of Broome County Community College. Curtis always loved animals and kept red foxes, burrowing owls and a red-tail hawk as pets.

Curtis left the family farm for the first time when he went to Germany as part of

the WWII occupation force. While there, he travelled in Europe and visited family in Norway, while serving as a marksman on the U.S. Army's rifle team. He organized a shooting club and created a skeet range at Stuttgart, Germany. He worked there as a heavy equipment operator, building the American Forces runways. While in the Army, he acquired the nickname, "Swede", as he was known for the remainder of his life.

After his service, he returned to North Dakota and spent time working for a farm equipment supplier, where he assembled tractors and combines shipped by train. He would assemble the equipment, put them through a test run & make the final adjustments before delivering to the local farmers. He moved west in the late 50s and became a volunteer fireman in Toppenish. While there, he met and married his wife, Mary (Salinas) and became a patrolman on the Toppenish Police Department. In time, he became Chief of Police, taking over from his friend, Chief Orville Onley. He made cowboy hats and boots the uniform for the police department. After leaving the police force, he worked at the Yakima Wildlife Refuge and later at Conboy National Wildlife Refuge. In addition, he was employed for many years by Parrish Farms, where he continued his work with heavy farm equipment. He often worked 50+ hours a week in his 70's, until his retirement.

Curtis Larson was named co-Grand Marshall of the Toppenish "Wild West Parade" in 2010, which was a great honor for him as a life-long member of the community. He also once served as Santa Claus in the Toppenish Christmas Parade, was a member of the VFW, Elks, Masons and the Yakama Warriors. He loved going out to breakfast before 7am, to see all his farming buddies. He enjoyed family gatherings, especially around the holidays, where he could be surrounded by his grandchildren, whom he dearly loved. He also loved Mexican food and everything his wife, Mary, made and canned. He was an avid gun-collector and taught his children and many of his grandchildren, proper gun safety and how to shoot. He fly-fished, hunted and butchered elk

for the Yakama Nation, keeping the family freezers full of fish & game. He loved to cook (but not to clean-up the kitchen) and there was always some experimental recipe he was working on. He especially like smoking meat, making elk & venison sausage, jerky, and drying fruit for his grandchildren. He always enjoyed German foods, any type of wild game, and for many years made his own beer. He was well known in the Yakima Valley for his beautiful Scroll-Saw Artwork, which is displayed in many of the Toppenish businesses.

With a sweet, goodnight kiss from his wife Mary, Curtis Norman Larson passed into the hands of his Lord on December 13, 2016 at the age of 87. He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Mary Christine (Salinas), his sister Phyllis Hagen of Northwood, North Dakota, his children, Karen Holm, Larry Larson, Laura Larson, Louisa Beckstrand, his two sons from a previous marriage, Scott and Kevin Larson, as well as an “honorary son”, Todd Lunning. His grandchildren, KristyRae, Christine, Lance, Kyle, Thor, Raven, Ursula, Chase and one great-grandchild, Jackson. He will be missed by his many cousins and family in Northwood, ND and the Washington Church Parish, the Salinas family, his “brothers and sisters” of the Yakama Nation, and the Toppenish farming community.

A Memorial Service will be held on Friday, December 23, 2016 at the Faith Lutheran Church in Toppenish, 12:00 p.m. A potluck luncheon will follow in the Fellowship Hall. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Toppenish Mural Society, the Yakama Warriors, or Faith Lutheran Church, in his honor.

Tribute Wall



“ *Curtis N. "Swede" Larson*

October 05, 2023 at 11:22 AM



“ *So sorry Curtis was a good man and cousin.
Cousin Patty Beatty 1403 104th Av, North
East Lakota, N. Dak. 58344*



Patty Beatty - December 30, 2016 at 05:57 AM



“ *He was my Grandpa! He was so many things to so many different
people. I am honored to know him and to of been apart of his life.*

Chrissy Edmondson - December 21, 2016 at 07:01 PM



“ *Jim Hanson lit a candle in memory of Curtis
N. "Swede" Larson*



Jim Hanson - December 21, 2016 at 11:15 AM



“ *Cousin Curt, was a good hunter and shot fox with my Dad flying the
plane in the winter.*

Jim Hanson - December 21, 2016 at 11:15 AM