

Gail M. Stensland
Great Falls Tribune - January 9, 2014
FORT BENTON

On the evening of January 6, 2014, Gail (age 84) passed away peacefully at the Missouri River Medical Center in Fort Benton, Montana surrounded by family. Gail was born on October 28, 1929 in Glasgow, Montana. He was the second child of Harold Stensland and Annette Stensland (Cotton).

Beginning in Gail's early years on the family farm/ranch on the Milk River outside of Glasgow he developed an early interest in agriculture, an interest that he carried throughout his life. 4-H and Future Farmers of America were organizations he was involved in. Upon graduating from Glasgow High School he enrolled at Montana State College in Bozeman. He was soon active on campus in the Lambda Chi Fraternity and was elected freshman class president. He received a bachelors degree in vocational agriculture and later a masters in education from MSU. Later in his life Gail was honored as the first recipient of the Montana State University Alumni Achievement Award.

Following up on his involvement in ROTC at MSU, he enrolled in the United States Air Force and served in Korea. He then embarked to Portugal as part of the International Farm Youth Exchange.

The most rewarding decision and commitment he made in his life was to marry Elinor Kathryn Tarum in Glasgow, Montana, who he shared his life with for the next 58 years. Gail accepted a teaching position in Fort Benton in 1956 where he would teach Montana history and vocational agriculture for the next 17 years. During this time, as they raised their family, Gail and Ellie made many life-long friends. Gail continued in education as superintendent in Inverness (1973-1976) and Culbertson (1976-1978). The Stensland family felt fortunate for the opportunity to return to Fort Benton, buying and operating Stensland's IGA from 1978-1991. Upon retirement Gail and Ellie valued the trips they were able to take with old friends and the time they spent with their children and families.

In addition to his family, a principle focus of Gail's life was his involvement in the community. He volunteered his time and energy in the following positions and organizations: St. Paul's Episcopal Church; Lion's & Kiwanis Club; Fort Benton CIA; Chouteau County Fair Secretary; Chouteau County Airport Board; Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation; Sunrise Bluffs;



Gail Stensland at 2008 Annual Meeting, Great Falls, MT

Upper Missouri Wilderness Waterway Cruise Co. and the Montana Agricultural Center and Museum.

Gail also valued his time as a “river rat” floating the Missouri River. Whether it was with the teacher group, family or guests, Gail loved the opportunity to retrace the footsteps of Lewis and Clark and share the history and experience with others.

Gail was outgoing, kindhearted, enjoyed life and always welcomed the opportunity to make a new friend. He worked hard, but took time to have fun with friends and family.

Gail was preceded in death by his father, Harold Stensland and his mother, Annette Stensland. Gail is survived by his wife, Ellie Stensland, his sons Dean (Kim) of Missoula, David (Karen) of Bend, Oregon, and Loran (Julia) of Ulm, his daughter, Sherry Kosenka (Ron) of Helena; his brother, Warren Stensland (Dorothy) of Pocatello, Idaho; his grandchildren, Desi, Jaren, Abby, Grace, Rachel, Lane, Logan, Kohlson, Karson, and Alison; his great-grandchildren, Liam and Ellie Jo; and numerous nieces and nephews.

The Stensland family would like to express their appreciation to the caring and dedicated employees of the Missouri River Medical Center who took such great care of Gail during his last years.

Viewing will be 6-8 pm Friday (Jan. 10) at the Episcopal Church in Fort Benton. Graveside Service with military rites at 10:30 a.m. Sat. (Jan. 11) at Riverside Cemetery. Memorial Service 12 noon Sat. at the Fort Benton Ag Center with reception to follow. Arr's by Rockman Funeral Chapel, Chester.

Memorials can be made to the Fort Benton organization of your choice or the Mc-Glaughlin Research Institute for Alzheimer's.

(Note: Stensland served on the Board of Directors from 1975 to 1979, and as President 1977-1978.)

prepared by Bob Gatten, January 17, 2014