



Obituary

Born: Wednesday, December 31, 1941

Died: Thursday, June 27, 2019

Jim Salmond

Fourth-generation Montana rancher James "Jim/Luke" Martin Salmond, 77, a ruggedly independent cowboy all his life, died June 27, 2019, at Benefis Teton Medical Center in Choteau after a brief illness.

Visitation will be Sunday from 6-8 p.m. at the Gorder-Jensen Funeral Home in Choteau. A graveside service will be July 1 at 1 p.m. at the Choteau Cemetery followed by a celebration of his life at 2 p.m. at the Stage Stop Inn convention center.

Jim was born in Great Falls on Dec. 31, 1941, to third-generation ranchers John C. "JC" and Alice (Johnson) Salmond, the younger of their two sons by just 11 months. Jim grew up on the Salmond Ranch and Saypo Cattle Co., a sprawling commercial cattle, hay and pasture operation in the foothills of the Rockies west of Choteau.

His family is part of the history of Choteau, where his grandmother, Carrie, was the first white child born in the Valley of the Teton River, and his great-grandmother was known as the "Cattle Queen of Montana."

When he was little, Jim attended the rural Bellview School and then Choteau Elementary. He graduated from Choteau High School in 1960. From the time he could pull on his cowboy boots, Jim was a rancher, working with his father and older brother, Jack, on the ranch.

Jim had a bright mind but was an indifferent student (who couldn't spell to save his life). The only reason he graduated from high school, his family jokes, is that his mother was on the school board and English teacher Dominic Reed liked him, giving him the nickname, "Little Lukey." Long after he left high school, Jim was still known to many as "Luke."

When Jim was a senior in high school, he started dating Frances Banis, a sophomore. After he graduated, he attended the University of Montana in Missoula for a year, coming home every weekend to see Francie. They were married on June 9, 1962, in Choteau, and made their home on the family ranch.

Jim and his family raised commercial Hereford and later Black Angus cattle, and for a time ran a herd of buffalo. J.C., Jack and Jim formed their own heavy equipment company in the late 1960s and worked full-time for three years building roads and drill pads for oil exploration companies from the Wyoming border on the south to the Canadian border on the north. Two of them would be out on the road at any given time while the other stayed home on the ranch and worked that business.

With this extra income, Jim was able to replace and rebuild all the barns, corrals and outbuildings on the family ranch. He and Francie always had a home in town too so their three sons, Ross, Mark and Brent, could attend school without a 50-mile a day commute.

Service Summary

Visitation

6:00 PM to 8:00 PM, Sun Jun 30, 2019

Gorder-Jensen Funeral Home

23 3rd St NW
Choteau, Montana 59422

Graveside Service

1:00 PM Mon Jul 01, 2019

Choteau Cemetery

East of Choteau on Highway 221
Choteau, Montana 59422

Celebration of Life

2:00 PM Mon Jul 01, 2019

Stage Stop Inn

1005 aMain Ave. North
Choteau, Montana 59422

Jim was a lifelong advocate of oil and gas exploration in the foothills of the Rockies. Throughout his life, he remained interested in the oil business and frequently spoke in favor of exploration and production on public and private lands. He toured Montana Gov. Ted Schwinden and U.S. Rep. Ron Marlenee around his ranch, showing them oil wells drilled without harming the countryside.

Jim lived his life the cowboy way: he never had any use for a written contract, preferring to seal the deal with a handshake. He passed his skills as a cowboy and rancher down to his sons, all three of whom are still ranchers, working their ranches with their own children and grandchildren.

The Salmonds were among the first in this area to use artificial insemination in their commercial cow herd. Jim also learned how to put up hay using beaverslides and then switched to piling the straight cut hay with bulldozers for 20-some years before the ranch invested in round balers.

Jim's goal in life was to have a successful ranching operation that would allow each of his three sons to prosper as ranchers themselves, and he accomplished that as Mark ranches on the home place, Ross ranches northeast of Choteau and Brent ranches outside of Forsyth.

Jim was diagnosed with atypical multiple sclerosis in 1974, but didn't let it slow him down, working as hard as he could every day and never complaining. He actively ranched until 1993, when his illness confined him to a wheelchair. Even then, however, he was still active.

He and Francie moved to a home in Choteau, and he went through four electric wheelchair carts, traveling all over Choteau, spending hours at Feed and Seed's "round table," and staying busy talking with friends and strangers alike. He especially loved touring around Choteau on July 3 and 4 when there were so many people to visit with.

He was a huge history buff with a vast array of knowledge about the ranching and Indian families who lived in the foothills. He loved pulling a good joke on his family and friends, who said his shenanigans were just honest fun, never mean.

He never cottoned onto the name "Rocky Mountain Front" and was vocal in his opposition to conservation easements and the conservation industry in general. He opposed the reintroduction of grizzly bears and gray wolves, knowing the potential for this to adversely impact ranchers.

When he was younger, he enjoyed hunting in the backcountry every fall and fishing with family and friends.

Through the years, he had many cow dogs, but his favorites were Bingo and Hoxey, a German shepherd-border collie cross, named after an old mountain man trapper from Sun River. He also had a favorite mule, Albert, that he rode all the time.

While he could be an ornery cuss and was never afraid to speak his mind, Jim was a soft-hearted man who loved his family. In his later years, he called his kids and grandkids daily — sometimes several times a day — and greatly enjoyed following his grandchildren's school, sports and rodeo

activities. He was very proud of his family's accomplishments.

Confined to his wheelchair, he became a great researcher on his computer and loved all the photos his family would text or email to him, thanks to the digital era's technology.

One of the things he was most proud about was receiving the Montana Advocacy Program's "Courage Award" in 2001 for joining a lawsuit with three other disabled Choteau residents to force the Teton County commissioners to make the county courthouse handicapped accessible in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Jim lived at home until just two weeks before his death, when he moved into the Benefis Teton Medical Center extended-care facility. He had settled in well at BTMC and was enjoying visiting with the nurses and aides and others living there before he became ill.

He is survived by his wife of Choteau; sons, Ross (Sandy) Salmond and Mark (Mary) Salmond, both of Choteau, and Brent (Lori) Salmond of Forsyth; grandchildren, Jimmy Salmond and Jeff (Cali) Salmond, all of Choteau, Chandler (Molly) Salmond of Chester, Celie and Molly Salmond of Choteau and Elliot (Ashley) Salmond and Emmet Salmond of Forsyth; great-grandchildren, Jace and Kooper Salmond of Choteau and Bennett and Beckhem Salmond of Chester; his brother, Jack Salmond of Bigfork; and his cousins Dick Stenson and Dorothy Weist, both of Choteau; and other relatives.

Memorials are suggested to the Benefis Teton Medical Center Foundation.

Condolences may be left on-line