



## Arlen William "Swede" McCloskey

September 13, 1934 - May 19, 2026

Arlen (Swede) William McCloskey passed away on May 19, 2026.

Swede was born on September 13, 1934, to Jim and Emma McCloskey in Oaks, North Dakota and was one of eight McCloskey children. He and his twin sister were sixth and seventh in line, and he was seventh in line to leave this world. Swede completed his 8th grade elementary education in Oaks, ND, then left school to support himself and lessen the financial burden on his family. As a youngster he worked with relatives doing farming and in an auto repair shop. This gave him an early start learning a diverse range of skills that he continued to develop throughout his life. He was born with a natural curiosity about how things worked and demonstrated a natural intelligence and gift for repairing, constructing, fabricating, and doing mechanical work. There wasn't much he couldn't build or fix.

According to dad, the moniker Swede was bestowed upon him by a local Norwegian dairy farmer that he, as a young lad, was working for. One day while trying to get a group of uncooperative cows to go along with the program, dad was letting go with a typical swear word rant at which point the farmer remarked "you sound just like a damn Swede"..... and it stuck!

One night at Poncho's dance hall located near White Earth, North Dakota, a beautiful young woman named Shirley Skaar caught Swede's eye. Swede and

Shirley were married on June 16, 1956. Their marriage lasted 67 years until Shirley's passing in 2023. Swede and Shirley spent the early years of their lives together frequently moving their young family throughout North Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming while Swede worked on various road construction projects. In 1961, they came to Butte and were soon able to purchase the family home in which they were able to raise their children. The kids have many fond family memories of family celebrations, holidays and good times causing trouble and having fun over the sixty plus years that the home remained in the family.

Swede and Shirley were proud parents of six rambunctious and independent children; Doug (Pam), Clay (Kae), Chuck (Cheryll), Em (Gary), Daryl (Jennifer) and Darin. The family expanded to include thirteen grandchildren, twenty-one great grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.

When Swede was a young single man, he worked on farms and as he would say the "Oil Patch" in North Dakota and Montana. During his young family days, he worked in construction as a heavy equipment mechanic throughout Montana and Wyoming. During the mid-70's he accepted the challenge of going north to Alaska to embark on his journey of master mechanic in the Alaska oil fields working 6 weeks at a time while living in remote man camps near Prudhoe Bay and Nome. He would return home for his two weeks off before returning for his next shift.

When he retired from Alaska he started and ran various family businesses in Butte. For his 2nd retirement he became a bit of a gardener at his "Poor Farm" near Hauser lake where he enjoyed a little fishing too. Swede loved to watch the weather on the local news and kept a daily eye on his rain gauges and numerous indoor and outdoor thermometers. Swede could always tell you what the weather was like in all of the locations that close family members resided in. Later in life he enjoyed watching the Seattle Mariners baseball

team. A personal highlight for him was a trip to Seattle to attend a couple Mariners games in person.

While humble and a man of few words in public, Swede was known to be a bit hot headed and could passionately cuss with the best of them (like a damn Swede). You could hear him from a considerable distance if he were frustrated with a project in his shop. He was also known to be stubborn. If pressed with something he'd rather not do, he would simply say "we'll see, we'll see" rather than say no. Close family learned this was his indirect way of saying no to what he perceived as a bad idea and often joke about it together when a debatable idea is brought to the table. As a child Swede learned to be an optimist from his father during the difficult economic times in rural North Dakota. A favorite phrase he learned from his father and often repeated was "tomorrow will be a better day." Most times he was right, but if not, well you know the saying, We'll See.

Swede could present a tough exterior, and wore his emotions on his sleeve, but in the end his big heart would eventually show itself and soften once the dust settled. He cared deeply about the welfare of his family, and friends and was always delighted to get a call so he could get caught up on news and events that impacted each of their lives. He always had numerous questions about what was happening in each person's life and in his own way showed his care and concern through his interest. We will all miss those conversations and of course letting him know how the weather is where we live.

Swede was preceded in death by his wife Shirley, parents Jim & Emma McCloskey, six siblings Rachel, Maurice, Hazel, Geraldine, Gerald and Arlene (his twin sister), great grandson Calvin and grandson Kevin. His youngest brother Curt survives.

Swede's Family sincerely appreciates the compassionate care provided by Dr. Yates and her team at Blacktail Health, along with the great staff of both the Crest nursing home and Big Sky on Waterford and all his poker friends.

In lieu of flowers please consider a donation to a charity of your choice.

We are planning a small private family gathering on June 16th, the date that Swede and Shirley would have celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary, to place his ashes with Shirley's.

# Cemetery Details

## **Holy Cross Cemetery**

4700 Harrison Avenue  
Butte, MT 59701

# Events

**Details are pending.**