



Bernard J. "Bernie" Lazzari

March 6, 1925 - December 10, 2021

A good man died today. He wasn't famous. You won't find his name in the history books. But he was a good man who lived a good life and he will not be forgotten.

Bernard Lazzari was born on March 6, 1925 to Josephine (Pesanti, later Conen) and Santino (Sam) Lazzari, the first of three sons to be raised in the Butte neighborhoods of McQueen and Meaderville. Bernie spent his childhood summers at his grandmother's ranch in Melrose and he spoke often of those days, when he and his brothers, Gilbert and Jack, would spend their hours fishing up and down the banks of the Big Hole River. Fishing the Big Hole was one of the great loves of Bernie's life and up until his last days, he would greet visitors with "Have you been out fishin'?"

Back in McQueen, his family home was a busy one. His parents hosted parties in the evenings and much to Bernie's dismay, he and his brothers were banished to the bedroom while the adults danced and sang in the front rooms. He told stories of how he and his brothers Gil and Jack would sneak out to listen to their mother play piano, before inevitably being caught and shooed back to bed.

Bernie was schooled at Holy Savior school and graduated from Boys' Central. During his high school years, he was a star halfback on the Boys Central High School team in 1942. Following his graduation from Boys' Central in 1943, he enlisted in the United States Air Force and trained to become a ball turret gunner on a B-24 Liberator. He was stationed in Italy – birthplace of his

grandparents – and flew 50 missions with the Fifteenth Air Force.

He had several close calls during those missions, which he documented in a journal. During one flight over Munich, his plane came under heavy fire, and Bernie wrote, "When we landed, I inspected and found a hole in the plane about one-quarter of a yard from my head caused by a piece of flak." Bernie flew his last mission on March 2, 1945, four days before his twentieth birthday. Following the war, Bernie returned home to Montana. He used the G.I. Bill to attend college at the University of Montana in Missoula. During one visit back to his hometown, he went to visit his mother at her business, a beauty salon she ran out of the Mayer Building on Park Street. It was a fateful day – for it was on there on the corner of Park and Montana Streets that he met the greatest love of his life – Lorraine Hannasch. That chance meeting on a street corner was the first page of a love story that would span 65 years.

The two were married on June 21, 1947, in St. Patrick's Church. Following their wedding, Lorraine joined Bernie in Missoula, where he was studying to become a pharmacist. Bernie and Lorraine were soon joined by two children, Dennis and Coleen. Following Bernie's graduation, the family moved first to Great Falls, where their daughter Candace was born, and then finally home to Butte. They lived in Meaderville, and were joined by a third daughter, Christelle. The family then settled on the Flats, and two more children - Dean and Kim – completed the family.

Bernie worked as a pharmacist, first at Fagans in Meaderville, which became The Village Pharmacy in 1954. In 1956, after the highway to Meaderville was closed, the Village Pharmacy was renamed Bernie and Jim's Pharmacy and moved to the East Gate shopping mall, where BSW is today.

In 1963, the store became Bernie's Pharmacy and Gifts. Known to the family simply as "The Store" it was more than Bernie's business and place of work. It was a community center, not just for the Lazzari family, but for the whole neighborhood. Friends gathered at the soda foundation, sharing coffee and stories and Bernie's quick wit would have everyone laughing. Bernie gave without hesitation to his community. Perhaps it was his experiences in World

War II that had taught him to give so freely, to show such care. Or perhaps it was his unshakable faith. Whatever it was, Bernie's gentle presence was gravitational and in its pull one could not help but feel at ease.

He could be counted on in a million small ways – to deliver prescriptions in the middle of the night, to be an usher at church, to invite friends to dinner. They were small things, but they were huge things.

After he retired as a pharmacist, he and Lorraine and the family continued to run the store as Bernie's Hallmark Cards and Gifts. The Store remained the hub of the Lazzari family and though the soda fountain was gone, the cups of coffee and stories remained. The checkout counter worked just as well. On any given morning, Bernie would be visited at work by one or two of his many friends – Arch Dudden and Clark Williams were the usual suspects – and together they would chat and reminisce with every customer who walked through the door. He was always ready to share a joke, a laugh, a memory. He was a small man with a big heart.

He retired – again - in 2008.

After his retirement, Bernie did his darndest to fill every opportunity with the important stuff - golfing and bowling. He and his best friend and brother, Gil, bowled with the league at Star Lanes for many years. He continued to fish his beloved Big Hole River and, on the weekends, he could be found at the Lazzari Village – the property he and Lorraine bought near Dewey. The Cabin was and is an incredible gift that Bernie gave to his family, providing them with a lifetime of memories along the river, just as Bernie and his brothers grew up with. The Cabin was like an extension of Bernie himself, a steady center where family could always find peace.

Lorraine passed away in 2012 and Bernie's life slowed down a little in the last decade of his life. He continued to golf, bowl, and fish, as long as his health made it possible, and he loved his weekend visits to the Cabin. He never missed church and continued to serve as usher at Saturday Mass at St. Anne's parish until only a few months ago. Every Sunday was Family Dinner –

and he never missed dessert.

Most of all, Bernie loved being with his family. Whether it was watching Lawrence Welk on Saturday nights, going out to Perkins for bacon and eggs, or having a beer at the D.S Lounge, Bernie was always up for visiting, and making memories with the people who loved him. Often, he would just sit and watch the bustle of his family gathered around him, and smile. How grateful we are for those memories.

Bernie's health declined over the last few months, but his humor and wit never did. Even in his last days, as family gathered to say goodbye, he managed to smile and crack a joke. Bernie passed away in the early morning hours of December 10, 2021, with his family at his side.

Bernie and Lorraine created a beautiful life together and though Bernie's passing leaves such a hole for his family and friends, we are comforted not only by the fullness of Bernie's life, but by the knowledge that he is at last reunited with his beloved Lorraine. What a legacy they created together. From that fateful meeting on the corner of Park and Montana Streets came 6 children, 12 grandchildren, and 9 great-grandchildren (so far).

Bernie leaves behind his children, Dennis Lazzari of Diamond Bar, Calif., Coleen (and Fred) Boyle of Butte, Candi (and John) Nordhagen of Butte, Chris (and Dan) Shields of Butte, Dean Lazzari of Denver, Colo., and Kim (and Rick) Parke of Dillon.

Bernie also leaves behind his brother, Jack Lazzari of Vancouver, Washington, and his 12 grandchildren: Conor (and Cheri) Boyle, Callie (and Matt) Boyle, Hannah (and Jay) Nordhagen, Jonny Nordhagen, Abbie (and Drew) Cziok, Kevin (and Jan) Shields, Kyle Shields, Brody Shields, Sam (and Kelsey) Parke, Shayanne Parke, and his step-grandsons, Jason (and Caitlin) Parke and Cory Parke.

He is also survived by his great-grandchildren, Caelum Moore, Bennet and Brett Woodward, Braiden and Declan Shields, Brooklyn Parke, Brianna and Conor Parke, and Noah Purcell.

Bernie was preceded in death by his parents, Sam and Josephine Lazzari, his

brother Gilbert, and the love of his life, his wife of 65 years, Lorraine Lazzari. He was also proceeded in death by his two grandchildren, Danny Shields, and Seth Nordhagen.

The family would like to extend our most sincere gratitude to Compassus Hospice, for their gentle care and kindness. Specifically, our thanks to Dr. Shawna Yates and to Bernie's home health nurse, Nanette. Special thanks also to Gabby Drew.

A celebration of Bernie's life will be on Thursday, December 16 at St. Ann Catholic Church. Friends may call at church beginning at 9:30, parish rosary services will be conducted at 10:30 and funeral mass will be celebrated at 11 o'clock. Entombment will be in Holy Cross Chapel Mausoleum, followed by a reception in the parish hall.

Contributions in Bernie's memory can be made to the Big Hole River Foundation, to Safe Space, or the local Food Bank.

The earth continues to turn. No flags will be flown at half-mast. But a good man died today and the world will never be the same.

Cemetery Details

Holy Cross Cemetery

4700 Harrison Avenue
Butte, MT 59701

Previous Events

Visitation

DEC 16. 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM (MT)

St Ann's Catholic Church
2100 Farragut Ave
Butte, MT 59701-6102
(406) 723-4303

Rosary

DEC 16. 10:30 AM (MT)

St Ann's Catholic Church
2100 Farragut Ave
Butte, MT 59701-6102
(406) 723-4303

Funeral Mass

DEC 16. 11:00 AM (MT)

St Ann's Catholic Church
2100 Farragut Ave
Butte, MT 59701-6102
(406) 723-4303

Tribute Wall

JK

“ Bernie was a amazing man sweetest person alive remember him always giving us free things at his stores wish I could of seen him in his later years he's truly missed.. and I loved reading all about him great obit marry Christmas Bernie nothing but love and prayers for your family

James kane - December 25, 2025 at 01:30 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Bernard J. "Bernie" Lazzari.



December 15, 2021 at 12:09 PM

 Mark Hodges

“ Bernie was a special person. Honest, giving, real, nothing phoney with Bernie. An absolute pleasure, he will be missed.

Mark Hodges - December 15, 2021 at 12:50 AM

HG

“ His Grandchildren purchased the [https://www.wayrynen-richards.com/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518"; target="_blank">Memorial Trees for the family of Bernard J. "Bernie" Lazzari.](https://www.wayrynen-richards.com/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518)

His Grandchildren - December 14, 2021 at 11:27 PM

WT

“ Colleen I couldn't wait to get some money and go up to the drug store and get a coke or a milk shake or just buy candy. What a great man. My mom loved him. Would talk to him every Saturday at mass. My dad used to say What a honorable and a real gentleman. So sorry for your loss. Bill Thomson

Willie Thomson - December 14, 2021 at 08:28 PM

LC

“ My condolences to the Lazzari Family. What a great write up for a great Man and a great life! Thank you for the visual of my Dad, Clarke, visiting at the store...brought a smile to my face! I can just imagine the conversations...I am sure many were about fishing! Such good Friends, and great Men from a great generation! - Laurie Williams Codr

Laurie Codr - December 14, 2021 at 04:48 PM

MP

“ My deepest condolences to all of you! Bernie will be missed by all of Butte and I know your hearts will ache for your wonderful father. He was a treasure.
Mary Ann Lohman Phillip

Mary Ann Phillip - December 14, 2021 at 02:42 PM

SI

“ What a beautifully written obituary for Bernie! My Dad was Clarke Williams and I can just see him greeting Bernie with a cup of coffee and catching up! Cherish and share the memories as that keeps them right here with us. Much love to you all!
Susan Istvanovich

Susan Jean Istvanovich - December 14, 2021 at 01:01 PM

SC

“ I worked at the Pharmacy, my first job, 1965-68. I worked with Bernie and Lorraine, who came in everyday. Mrs. Herrick was there, his daughter Colleen, a friend, and others who’s names I’ve forgotten.

Bernie was an excellent “boss” and the Pharmacy was a community resource. Lovely family. He had a long and happy life. Condolences to the family. Sharon Canny

S Canny - December 14, 2021 at 12:18 PM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Bernard J. "Bernie" Lazzari.



December 14, 2021 at 09:21 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Bernard J. "Bernie" Lazzari.



December 13, 2021 at 12:32 PM



“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



Wayrynen-Richards Funeral Home - December 13, 2021 at 11:59 AM