



Dalton Fisher "Dal" Sessions

January 30, 1937 - November 16, 2024

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Dalton (Dal) Fisher Sessions passed away peacefully the afternoon of November 16, 2024, at Big Sky on Waterford Senior Living Center in Butte, MT surrounded by loving family. He said many times in the months before he passed that he had a life well lived and his bucket list was complete. He was 87.

Dal was born on January 30th, 1937, in Flint, MI to Howard and Roma Sessions. He had one sibling, his sister Jean. Most of Dal's lifelong passions were formed in his early years. Always an avid reader, Jean took him to get his first library card when he was eight. Dal checked out as many books as he could carry and read them all in a day. He developed a love for the outdoors on numerous trips with family. The most precious time he spent outdoors was with his Granddad Fisher who spent countless days taking him hunting and fishing. Dal developed his love for ham radios by working in his dad's electronics shop on weekends. His DIY skills were honed while working in his stepdad's (Jesse Folsom) hardware store. His passion for aviation, which led him to his profession, came from going on flights with his cousin Burton in an old J-3 Piper Cub.

A few months after graduating from high school, Dal launched his adventuresome adult life by enlisting in the Air Force on a whim. He asked Jean to let their mom know because he was too afraid to tell her himself. Dal did well in basic training and was told he could select any enlisted job in the Air Force. After briefly considering learning Chinese and working in Intelligence, he soon found he was better suited to be an air traffic controller. He graduated from ATC school in May 1956 and was assigned to Edwards Air Force base, CA. Edwards was the Air Force Test Flight Center famous for events like Chuck Yeager breaking the sound barrier. Dal got to meet people like Jimmy Doolittle and pilots who would go on to be among the nation's early astronauts. But no event at Edwards would impact his life more than a trip to Los Angeles barely a month after arriving in California.

On June 23rd, 1956, on a date arranged by her brother, Dal met the beautiful and charming Marian Alyce Patz. Their romance blossomed and they soon agreed Marian should return home to save up for an anticipated wedding. Separated by miles, love letters followed, including one where Dal seemed to will the future into existence stating: "Thinking about all the of the wonderful times we have had and of the many more we will have in the lifetime ahead of us." After a whirlwind romance, they were married on August 24, 1957, in Elmhurst, IL. They set up their first home in a converted WWII Marine Corps barracks outside of Edwards in the California desert. This was the start of their nearly 60-year marriage and the first of what would be 25 moves as a family. Dal made his own bit of history at Edwards, becoming the first father to be present in the delivery room there, for the birth of their first child, Michele.

After four years in the Air Force, Dal was discharged on September 1, 1959. He had already applied to the FAA to be a civilian air traffic controller. Holding out for the right position in the FAA, Dal and Marian returned to Flint. Finally, in December 1959, Dal received an offer to work in the tower at Denver's Stapleton Airport. Dal and Marian had fallen in love with the Rockies on their

honeymoon drive back to Edwards after their wedding. They were thrilled to be heading back west. Dal's 37-year career in the FAA included three assignments to Denver, CO; Helena, Missoula, and Billings MT; Pueblo, CO; Chicago, IL; Buffalo, NY; Anchorage, AK; Seattle, WA; and a two month trip to China as part of a special FAA delegation. Dal retired from the FAA on August 31, 1992, spending most of his retirement in Montana.

Dal never attended college but read any and every piece of printed literature he could get his hands on. He was an absolute sponge for knowledge and western history was one of his top passions.

Dal's list of favorite activities was extensive. His love of fishing and the outdoors was lifelong. As a young husband, he would wake early to catch fresh fish for breakfast. During retirement, whenever his son, sons-in-law, or grandchildren were in town, a trip to a nearby stream, river, or lake was always in order. When he reached the point, he could no longer hunt and fish, he reveled in discussing outdoor experiences with family members who are carrying on his legacy. Dal was always good with his hands and tools. He learned to refinish antique furniture from his mom and stepdad and turned many pieces into family heirlooms. He and Marian teamed up on antique trunks and turned them into works of art. Many family members have pieces that were touched by their loving hands. Dal also loved his antique clocks. He learned to maintain and rebuild many types of movements. His love of western history came to life being a member and president of the Helena Lewis and Clark Historical Society.

Dal taught his family, friends, and coworkers, through word and deed, the importance of kindness and patience, of listening before you speak, of humility, generosity and faithfulness. He was passionate and measured, scrupulous and forgiving. Nearly everyone who had the privilege of knowing

him has a memory of learning from Dal lessons both practical and profound.

The family is grateful that Dal and Marian are reunited once again. She has been waiting for seven years to “dote over her fella” again. Dal was preceded in death by Marian, his parents, stepparents and sister. Dal is survived by their four children: Michele Engebretson and husband Steve, Madison, VA; Deanna Louise, Phoenix, AZ; Denise Heesch and husband Rev. Jay Heesch, Wisconsin Dells, WI; and Dale Sessions and wife Dr. Lisa Sessions, Butte, MT. He was loved by 11 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren.

We are thankful for the exceptional care Dr. Jessie Kutzman, Julia Wilson, LPN, and our own Dr. Lisa Sessions provided to Dal. He often said he was alive because of Lisa, Jessie and modern medicine.

The family requests memorials be sent to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

https://secure.nationalmssociety.org/site/Donation2?df_id=55995&55995.donation=form1

Cemetery Details

Fort Harrison Veterans Cemetery

1900 Williams Street
Helena, MT 59602

Events

Details are pending.

Tribute Wall

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“ I will miss chatting with Dal. His quick wit and wealth of knowledge about EVERYTHING made him a pleasure to visit with. I still chuckle at him wearing his pirate shirt with his eye patch.

Debbie E - November 21, 2024 at 08:58 PM