

*Cecil Alonzo Gartner*

**Born**

*November 28, 1923 Missoula, MT*

**Died**

*April 2, 2017 Sidney, MT*

**Mass of the Christian Burial**

*10:00 A.M., Monday, April 10, 2017*

*St. Matthew's Catholic Church*

*Sidney, Montana*

**Celebrant**

*Fr. Jim O'Neil*

**Music**

*Amber Gartner Madelyn Gartner*

*Kyle Nickman*

**Casketbearers**

*Rod Gartner Ambrey Gartner*

*Bryan Gartner Clyde Gartner*

*Coin Gartner Tom Gartner*

**Ushers**

*Greg Metsker Mark Martin*

**Interment with Military Honors**

*1:00 P.M., CST*

*Tuesday, April 11, 2017*

*North Dakota Veterans Cemetery*

*Mandan, North Dakota*

**Funeral** will be served at the Richland  
**Event Center** following the Mass

*Funeral home remembrances, condolences, and pictures*

*may be viewed at the Fulkerson-Stevenson Funeral Home*

*at 1000 1st St. SE, Sidney, MT 59701  
[www.fulkersons.com](http://www.fulkersons.com)*

**It had to be somebody who'd plow deep  
and straight...and not cut corners.**

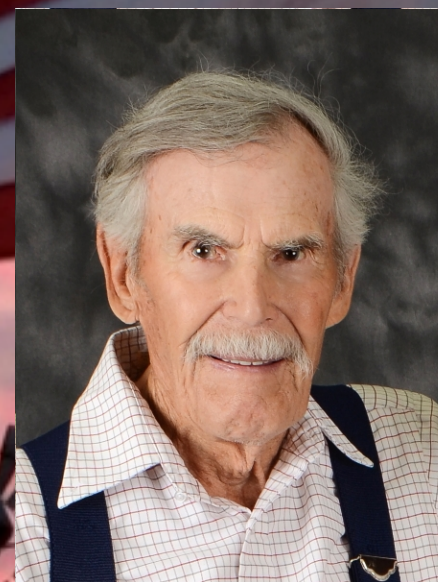
**Somebody to seed and weed, feed and  
breed...and rake and disc and plow and  
plant and tie the fleece and strain  
the milk.**

**Somebody to replenish the self feeder  
and then finish a hard days work with a  
five mile drive to church. Somebody  
who'd bale a family together with the  
soft strong bonds of sharing, who'd  
laugh and then sigh...and then respond  
with smiling eyes, when his son says he  
wants to spend his life "doing what  
dad does".**

**So, God made a farmer!**



*"See ya later"*



*In Loving Memory Of*

***Cecil Alonzo Gartner***

**November 28, 1923**

**April 2, 2017**

Cecil Alonzo Gartner, a farmer and rancher whose unwavering work ethic was instilled in the 12 children he raised with his wife of seven decades, died at his home surrounded by family on Sunday, April 2, 2017. The World War II veteran was 93.

A man of the land, Cecil's first occupational love was farming, yet he worked at the Holly Sugar factory and even spent a few years as the rural mailman between fixing tractors, baling hay and tending calves in sub-zero temperatures in eastern Montana.

The work in later years was punctuated by competitive pinochle, teaching young Gartners to hunt and care for newborn calves, listening to the fiddle and requesting Clementine on repeat. He sketched in birthday cards and drove hundreds of miles to visit newborn or graduating grandchildren.

He was a man of few but choice words. "Be good, study hard, and say your prayers," he told his college-bound children, kicking their vehicle's tires one last time. Then up and over the hill they drove, waving goodbye out the window.

Cecil was born in Missoula on November 28, 1923. His parents, Phillip and Susan Gartner, soon moved back to the farm in Richardton, North Dakota.

He served in the Army near the end of World War II, stationed on a troop ship at what was then Ceylon, India, at Lord General Mountbatten's Southeast Asia Headquarters. Decades later, he'd pull out an aging-paper book of black-and-white photos -- him at the Taj Mahal, or with his fellow soldiers -- to show his grandchildren.

He married Helen Alouisa Messer on June 24, 1947. Helen had followed one of her sisters to California during the war and was working as a waitress when, she says, Cecil convinced her to come home and marry him. (But according to family lore, they started dating after he took another sister to a dance.)

They moved to Sidney, and children quickly followed. As the family grew, dinner meant assigned seats with secret food-flicking that once ended with a pickle slice flying undetected onto Cecil's plate. He ate it, to the silent terrified glee of the young culprits.

He'd offer his young son the tastebud-maligned "Sluggo" (whisky), likely a move of reverse psychology. A

small daughter once peered into a deep hole to find her father smiling, shovel in hand, because he'd just hit water. And he made good on a promised ice cream cone to another daughter after she stood quietly, despite taunting candy machines, during a rare trip with her dad to a grain elevator.

Grandchildren eventually arrived, nearly two dozen in all. Cecil would greet them with a slow, "Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy," as he shuffled into the kitchen or through the front door, often in work boots and a plaid ear-flapped hat. Three slugs to the arm or a tug on a ponytail usually followed.

If he disappeared, they could usually find him napping -- behind the couch, on a combine's steering wheel, atop a trampoline -- or by following the pattering of riding lawnmower. Or at 4 a.m. in the kitchen taking a pull of Wild Turkey, explaining: "It helps keep the body limber and warm."

The physical slowing of age annoyed him. As his sons helped him into a canoe during a recent portage in Minnesota's Boundary Waters, he quipped: "Ten years ago, I could have done a backflip into this thing."

Yet even in his 80s, he could -- after a minute or two -- shake off a calf's kick to his thigh or settle a dispute between two damn bulls with a nudge from his tractor. And when he wanted time alone with Helen, he told one son-in-law trying to join them for an evening beer on the porch: "I'm trying to make hay here, boy!"

His Ram Charger offered views, thanks to rusted-out floorboards, of the gravel road passing below. Visitors also learned his tricks: Convincing you to turn your back on an ornery sheep, or insisting "snakebite medicine" or "flu shots" (of Black Velvet) could cure just about anything.

But don't touch the guns, including one in the bathroom (behind the door, "because you never want to be caught with your pants down"). Unless someone unwanted came into the house, then grab the closest one and aim for a leg; if that doesn't work, he advised, aim higher.

A good laugh was guaranteed via Beetle Bailey or a Steve Martin-John Candy movie. Polka dancing in the kitchen sometimes followed sweeping up after dinner; he and Helen loved to dance, and for many years were part of a square-dance club.

He was determined to scatter pheasants for a granddaughter who couldn't quite get the shot. And he pulled his grandchildren on a toboggan behind a tractor -- though he didn't always hear when they fell off.

Cecil was well read and interested in current events. He had to hear the daily news and read the newspaper, and enthusiastically discussed history. His humility, intelligence, words of wisdom and deep Catholic faith were evident in his daily life.

Along with his wife, Cecil is survived by their children Rod (Madelyn), Cecile McManus, Ambrey (Sharon), Phyllis Gartner, Bryan (Denise), Clyde (Roy Mattson), Mary Martin (Mark), Colin (Sue), Louise (Nancy Gustin), Grace Metsker (Greg), Jean Nickman (Jim) and Tom (Martha). His grandchildren include Erin, Amber and Bryce Gartner; Rachel, Ben, Keegan (Melissa) and David Gartner; Kristin Gannon (Jamie Butler) and Daniel Jenkins (Kelli); Zach Gartner; Kimberly (fiance Tyler Hamlin) and Neil Martin; Marianne and Christopher Gartner; Lindsay Bean (fiance Matt Sacksteder); Meredith and Phillip Metsker; Beth, Kyle and Noah Nickman; and Owen Gartner. And his great-grandchildren: Aidan, River, Lucy and Luke. His brother Gordon and his sister, Susan Decker.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his brother Robin.

