

## OBITUARIES

**Robert Clarence Reid**

Irrigon

August 14, 1924 — December 3, 2019

Robert Clarence Reid, 95, of Irrigon, Oregon, died Tuesday, December 3, 2019, in Hermiston with family by his side. He was born on August 14, 1924, in Heppner to parents Clarence and Viola Reid.

Robert was raised in multiple Eastern Oregon communities and attended school in John Day. His first child was born in 1944 and shortly after, Robert enlisted in the U.S. Army where he was a committed WWII soldier. He proudly served on Okinawa and in Korea and was honorably discharged as a sergeant in 1946 and received a letter from President Roosevelt for his service in Korea.

Robert moved back to John Day, then Spray and on to Kinzua where he worked for the local sawmills for several years. He then moved to Hermiston and worked at C & B Feedlot. In 1979, he moved to Heppner and married Hazel Spivey. Robert worked at ODOT until his retirement. He remained in Heppner for 30 years before settling in Irrigon.

Robert always kept busy. He spent many days hunting and camping when he was younger, and his love for fishing continued throughout his adventurous life. He also enjoyed working with leather and raising animals, especially his sheep. Robert's greatest love, his wood-working, started early in life. He built himself two homes, but he most loved

seeing logs and his time crafting hope chests, bird houses, jewelry boxes, and other knickknacks, and sharing them with family, friends and other crafters.

Robert also loved music and spending time with his family.

He is survived by his children Loraine Wilson (Floyd), Raymond Reid (Deena), Janie Kepler (Darryl), Judy Walston (Michael Bothom), Debbie Bloom (Bill) and son-in-law Steve

Conlee.

He is preceded in death by his parents, his wife Hazel, siblings James Reid, Russell Reid, Lola Houtchin, Clara Whitney and Mary Johnson, and children Roberta Conlee, Melba Mitchell and Neil Methias. Robert had 26 grandchildren, 58 great-, 28 great-great-, and nine great-great-great-grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews.

The family would like to thank Good Shepherd Hospital for their tender loving care. For those wishing to make a donation in honor of Robert, they can be made to the "Wounded Warriors Project," P.O. Box 758517, Topeka, KS 66675-8517.

A Celebration of Life was held on Sunday, December 8 at 2 p.m. at the Harkenrider Senior Center, 255 N.E. Second St., Hermiston, Oregon.

Arrangements by Sweeney Mortuary of Heppner. You may sign the online condolence book at [sweeinemortuary.com](http://sweeinemortuary.com).



Reid

**Leo C. 'Lee' Geissel Jr.**

Umatilla

January 8, 1944 — November 29, 2019

Leo C. 'Lee' Geissel Jr. passed away on November 29, 2019, at his home in Umatilla surrounded by his loving family at the age of 75.

Lee was born January 8, 1944, in Tacoma, Washington, to Leo C. Geissel Sr. and Betty Graham Geissel. The family lived in Gig Harbor, Washington, where he attended school through the seventh grade. They moved briefly to Richland, Washington, and later to Milton-Freewater where he attended high school and graduated from McLoughlin (Mac-Hi) in 1962.

Lee enlisted in the Army in May of 1962. He was a field maintenance tank mechanic and served in Germany for two years. After completing his tour of duty, he moved back to Milton-Freewater and went to work for the United States Postal Service as a city letter carrier, and was later appointed to postmaster in Athena, Oregon. In 1982 Lee was promoted to postmaster in Umatilla, Oregon. He retired from that position in January of 1999 after a 36-year career.

He married his wife and soul mate, Ellen, on October 10, 1992. Lee always loved to travel. Following his retirement, he set out with the goal of visiting all 50 states, which he completed, with the exception of Alaska. He loved the history of the open road and he and his wife traveled old Route

66 through California and Arizona. He also loved NASCAR and attended races as often as possible. He loved classic cars and owned and showed several over the years. Other interests included hunting, fishing, rooting for the Oregon Ducks, and also hunting mushrooms with his family.

Lee has left a legacy of love, and a huge void in the life of his loved ones.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Leo and Betty Geissel. He is survived by his wife Ellen; son Chuck (Donna) Geissel of Milton-Freewater, son Ken (Dena) Geissel of Hermiston, and daughter Heidi Geissel, also of Hermiston; stepdaughters Jaimie (Arcadius) St. Laurent of Eatonville, Washington, Mystie (Jeremy) Grover of Prineville, and Allison (John) Spurlock, also of Prineville; seven grandchildren; 10 stepgrandchildren; two great-grandchildren, and seven stepgreat-grandchildren; sister Suzie (Ron) Sams, brother Glen (Cheryl) Geissel, and sister Gretchen (Greg) Baker, all of Walla Walla, Washington.

A memorial service was held on Monday, December 9, 2019, at 1 p.m. at Munselle-Rhodes Funeral Home, 902 S. Main, Milton-Freewater, OR 97862. We wish to express our deepest gratitude to Vange John Memorial Hospice. Their care and support was deeply appreciated. To leave an online condolence, visit [www.munsellerhodes.com](http://www.munsellerhodes.com).



Geissel

**Kathryn Marion Johnson (Camerotas, Custer, Cooper, McKinney)**

Milton-Freewater

December 24, 1928 — November 29, 2019

Kathryn ("Kay") was born to Milbra Hightower Johnson and Herbert Cephus Johnson in Vernon, Florida. Her older brother, Herbert C. John-

son Jr. ("Coot"), and she were fortunate to have hard-working, enterprising parents and grandparents. They lived next door to their grandmother for a time, and Kay had access to a piano and piano lessons, which her mother and father both strongly supported. "Kay Piano" was an incredibly gifted, well-rounded pianist and singer. She played passionately until right up to her death. Her love of piano shaped her life and her world.

Kay was very glamorous and a natural entertainer. She played piano and organ (and several other instruments, including ukulele and accordion as well), sang in churches, choirs, plays, "senior follies" groups, even the San Diego Chorale Club, and many restaurants and nightclubs. She met at least two of her husbands while playing in nightclubs.

Her first husband was Sam Camerotas, a man of Greek heritage whose family had various business enterprises in the South, including a restaurant. That marriage was brief and did not produce any children.

Kay next married Prentice Jackson Custer ("Jack"), a very handsome career Navy pilot whom she met in Pensacola. Jack was raising his young daughter, Pennee, only 2 years old, when they met. Jack had served as an aviator/navigator in World War II. Kay fell in love with both Jack and his adorable daughter, and they wed in 1950. Son Prentice Jackson Custer Jr. followed in 1951, daughter Kittee Custer in 1952, son Michael Steven Custer in 1954, and son Allen Rockford Custer in 1957! The five children traveled around the country with their mother and father, following Jack to duty stations in the southeast in early days. Jack was then assigned to duty at Coronado, California, near San Diego.

From Southern California Jack was transferred to New Iberia, Louisiana, where he trained jet pilots and Kay joined the other Navy wives and families entertaining themselves and the naval community with plays and music. The family lived on a small part (6 acres) of a large Southern plantation and had lots of dogs, cats, chickens, ducks, and two ponies that were an absolute dream come true for daughter Kittee.

From there the family moved to Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, where Jack attended the Army War College and was commissioned a commander in the Navy upon his graduation. As always, Kay was the center of any musical undertakings at school or among the military community, which included Army and Navy.

The family then returned back to the same house in San Diego, California, where the children resumed their earlier friendships. The Beatles hit the mainstream, and Kay appreciated the musicianship of them and numerous other rock bands. She added the music of the Sixties to her classical, jazz, Broadway, and nightclub repertoire. During her cruises, Jack had made numerous reel-to-reel tape recordings of dozens of record albums of every kind. These were played for years and years in the Custer home, giving some of the children a very large library of songs and lyrics for the rest of their lives.

Finally, saving the best for last, the family moved to what would be Jack's final duty station: Hawaii. Kay had always been a gifted seamstress and knitter, and in Hawaii she indulged her love of the very colorful local fashions by making dozens and dozens of aloha shirts, muumuus, gorgeous flowered dresses, and "jams," a style of low-slung shorts worn by everyone who loved the Islands. The entire family was a walking garden of flowered shirts and clothing.

After Jack retired from the Navy, he and Kay divorced. Kay immediately applied her substantial musical talents to numerous positions, playing piano

and singing all over Oahu. She played at Shakey's Pizza in Kaneohe, which happened to be next door to Honey's Lounge, owned by the mother of the very famous entertainer Don Ho and where Don got his start. Kay also played and sang at Pinky's Broiler, a local mid-size restaurant just outside the Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station. The Marine base provided a captive audience for the glamorous torch singer. The food and drinks were good, the entertainment was fabulous, and Kay was getting a lot of good press. She was soon hired to work in a few large hotels with piano bars in Waikiki, including the Ilikai Hotel's Grotto Lounge, and was invited to guest play at other piano bars when she visited them. With her sewing talent as well, she made striking outfits for her gigs in Waikiki, and she enjoyed this very much.

While working at Pinky's Broiler, Kay had met Joe Cooper. He was in the Air Force, about to retire and planning to work in Iran during the oil boom there. When Joe left, Kay sold her home in Hawaii to move back to Pensacola, where her parents were aging, so she could spend much more time with them. After she arrived and settled there, she and Joe divorced.

Kay stayed in Pensacola 40 more years, taking care of her parents until their deaths, playing piano, and working for Baroco Electric Construction as a secretary. She met and married Lester ("Buddy") McKinney, whom she had met through an office friend. Unfortunately, Buddy had a chronic illness, and after several years they divorced. Along with her office job, Kay continued with her music in church and playing for two "senior follies" entertainment groups right up until she became incapacitated at 89.

Kay's son Mike had moved his family to Pensacola when he learned he had cancer. Mike survived cancer for several years, long enough to raise his children and settle his family in a lovely home near Kay. As Kay aged into her 80s (still working two music jobs and caring for her large house and rambling yard), she developed very close and loving relationships with Mike's widow Stacy and all six of Mike's children from two marriages.

Kay suddenly took ill in early 2018. Son Jack immediately flew to her side from

on home improvement projects. He enjoyed going fishing and was a member of the V.F.W. Desert Post #4750 in Hermiston.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Bob and Billy; and sisters Maxine, Edith and Wynema. He is survived by his wife of 42 years, Christine; sons Jodey and wife Cynthia Ballard, and Thomas and wife Katrina Walker; daughters Stella and husband Kirt Hickey, and Melinda and husband David West; brothers Jack Walker and Thomas Walker; 13 grandchildren; and many nieces, nephews and extended family members.

Viewing will be Friday, December 13 from 4-7 p.m. at Burns Mortuary. A funeral service will be held at 4 p.m. Saturday, December 14, 2019, at Burns Mortuary chapel, 685 W. Hermiston Ave., Hermiston, OR 97838. Arrangements by Burns Mortuary of Hermiston. To leave an online condolence, please go to [www.burnsmortuaryhermiston.com](http://www.burnsmortuaryhermiston.com).

Don was always working



Johnson

**Kathleen Joyce Trott**

Umatilla

May 27, 1953 — November 29, 2019

Kathleen Joyce Trott of Umatilla was born May 27, 1953, in Astoria, Oregon, the daughter of Gregg and Lura (Robson) Trott. She passed away in Umatilla on Friday, November 29, 2019, at the age of 66.

Kathleen graduated from Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane in 1971. She lived in the communities of Tacoma, Wash., Tucson, Ariz., and Spokane, Wash., before moving to Umatilla, Ore., 20 years ago. She worked in retail management for over 20 years. The last 12 years she worked as a records clerk at the Umatilla Chemical Depot for Washington Group International, being one of the final staff to leave the chemical demilitarization project at the project's completion.

Kathleen enjoyed gardening, growing flowers, photography and making jewelry. Her pet cats, all five of them, were her

children. She was preceded in death by her father, Gregg Trott, and a brother, Richard Trott.

She is survived by her mother, Lura Trott; brother David and wife Sheila Trott; and extended family members. A memorial gathering will be announced at a later time.

The family would like to thank the doctors and wonderful nurses at the Tri-Cities Cancer Center, the staff of Vange John Memorial Hospice, Dr. Mark Donnelly of Good Shepherd Medical Center Emergency Department, the staff of Good Shepherd Personal Home Care, and John and Ken of Burns Mortuary.

Arrangements by Burns Mortuary of Hermiston. To leave an online condolence for the family please go to [www.burnsmortuaryhermiston.com](http://www.burnsmortuaryhermiston.com).



Trott

**Don Eldon Walker**

Hermiston

June 7, 1950 — December 3, 2019

Don Eldon Walker of Hermiston was born June 7, 1950, in Okarche, Oklahoma, the son of William and Stella (Fry) Walker. He passed away in Hermiston on December 3, 2019, at the age of 69.

He attended school and graduated from high school in Walla Walla, Wash., in 1968. After high school, he served as a jet mechanic in the Air Force for four years during the Vietnam War. After his honorable discharge, he lived in Redding, Calif., where he attended two years of college.

Don married Christine Ballard on May 26, 1977, in Walla Walla, Wash. The couple lived in Walla Walla and Touchet, Wash., before moving to Hermiston in 1991.

He worked as an electrician for KIE Electrical Supply and Crescent Electric for many years. He then worked as a diesel electrician for Union Pacific Railroad Hinkle Yard for 22 years, retiring in 2017.

Don was always working

on home improvement projects. He enjoyed going fishing and was a member of the V.F.W. Desert Post #4750 in Hermiston.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Bob and Billy; and sisters Maxine, Edith and Wynema. He is survived by his wife of 42 years, Christine; sons Jodey and wife Cynthia Ballard, and Thomas and wife Katrina Walker; daughters Stella and husband Kirt Hickey, and Melinda and husband David West; brothers Jack Walker and Thomas Walker; 13 grandchildren; and many nieces, nephews and extended family members.

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Walker



## OBITUARY POLICY

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