



Family Receive Friends

Thursday, May 22, 2025 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.
Stevenson & Sons Funeral Home
Broadus, MT

Mass of Christian Burial

Friday, May 23, 2025 at 11:00 a.m.
St. David's Catholic Church
Broadus, MT

Officiating

Father Jolly Pathiyamoola

Pallbearers

Keri Reese, Luke Hayes, Sarah Hayes Jones
Cecil Hayes, Erik Hayes, Christopher Hayes
Ashley Weaver, Adam Amende, Jessica Walton

*Following the Mass of Christian Burial,
a light luncheon will be held in the Church basement.
Everyone is welcome.*

Rite of Committal

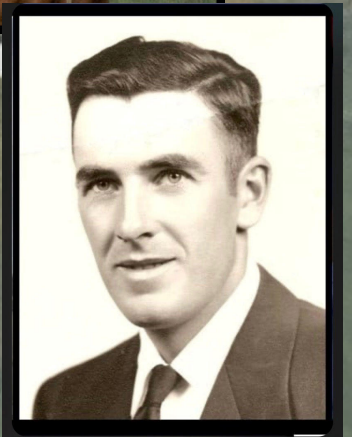
Friday, May 23, 2025 at 2:15 p.m.
Ridge Cemetery
Ridge, MT

*Following the Rite of Committal, a luncheon will be held
at Rocky Point Community Hall.
Everyone is welcome.*

Arrangements By

Stevenson & Sons Funeral Home

In Loving
M E M O R Y



Francis Hayes

OCTOBER 23, 1931 - JANUARY 27, 2025



Francis J. Hayes was born in Belle Fourche, SD October 23, 1931, and passed away at the Powder River Manor in Broadus, Montana on January 28, 2025, at the age of 93. Francis lived his entire life in Ridge, MT, ranching, with the exception of when he attended middle and high school in Belle Fourche, SD, living with his two sisters. After high school he returned to the family ranch in 1949 and while working there, he received his private pilot's license before he received his "real" automobile license and bought an airplane before he ever owned a car. He went on to obtain his instructor's and commercial flying license in his early twenties. He met Elsa Loken in 1954, who was teaching at the Ridge school, and they married in September of 1955. After Francis and Elsa were married, they continued to live and work on the family ranch, where in the early years of their marriage, Francis was a crop duster and played music for local dances for extra income. They brought 4 children into the family and lived a very full and busy life.

Francis was an accomplished oil artist. He began studying art via correspondence courses in 1963 and continued on from there. He never missed an opportunity to advance his skill, taking additional lessons every chance he got, including several lessons from an artist that was in the local county jail, and even one lesson from the famous Bob Ross, and in doing so, his talent grew and his style evolved. He won numerous awards for his paintings, several of which were published in various magazines, including the *Western Horseman*. Not only was Francis an exceptional painter, but he also made furniture in his later years when life slowed down. He made unique coffee tables, as well as shelves, corner handkerchief tables, 3 legged stools, and lamp stands. He was also a blacksmith, welding and shaping metal into whatever creative design he deemed necessary for his project, often combining his metal creations with his wood work. And of course there was the Christmas Star. If you ever drove to Ridge during the Christmas season you could see The Star from miles away. It was originally placed on top of the old Ridge School House but as time went on, Francis decided to enlarge it and placed it on the big north hill at Ridge. On a good clear night The Star could be seen from 20 miles away. Francis was a master craftsman, to say the least- you name it, he'd make it.

Francis loved being a rancher. He loved the area his grandfather, Joe Hayes, homesteaded on and was always thankful for the forsite Joe had, to stop at Ridge, to open the family store.

Francis' true passions were God, family, ranch life, art and airplanes. He talked about how he loved to put up hay and the fulfilment it gave him to see all the bales in the fields and after they were gathered in the hay yard.

Calving time was another special time, as he adored the new life that appeared every spring. Besides God and family, we truly believe airplanes were his absolute favorite. He never tired of talking about them. But his family was his greatest treasure. He was happiest when his house was full of kids. His kids, grandkids, great grand kids or other peoples kids. I believe his motto in life was, the more the merrier. His home was a place where anyone who entered immediately felt welcomed, loved, and at ease—a true reflection of the warmth and kindness he radiated. It was clear to all who met Francis that he had a special gift for making people feel at home.

A full-time cattle rancher, Francis was also committed to supporting various endeavors outside of the family business. He began working in middle school at Fred Padaloky's Meat Market & Groceries and Bowling Alley in Belle Fourche, SD, balancing work after school and on Saturdays. He was a member of St. David's Catholic Church in Broadus, MT, serving in the Men's group, Pancake Maker, Eucharistic Minister and Minister of the Word. He served as a Brand Inspector for 60 years or more, was an active School Board Member, involved in Meat Promoters and the Toastmaster Club. He served as a Board Member for Southeast Electric Cooperative from 1976 to 2016, including a tenure as President from 1984 through 1998. Francis also represented Upper Midwest Electrical (1983-1998), which served a 9-state region, traveling annually to Washington DC, lobbying for hydroelectric power initiative, advocating for maintenance and upkeep of hydroelectric dams and related infrastructure. While at Upper Midwest Electrical, he also worked for Upper Missouri Power Cooperative out of Sidney, MT.

While his physical presence will be deeply missed, the legacy of his love for life, his community, and his family will live on in the hearts of those who were lucky enough to know him. We will all miss Francis, his humor, and his unwavering love for life.

Francis is survived by his four children, Thomas Hayes, Charlene Hayes Elston, Mitchell (Connie) Hayes and Karen (Phillip) Christy. Nine grandchildren and nineteen great grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews.

Francis is preceded in death by his wife, Elsa Hayes, parents, Cecil and Helen Hayes, sister's Patricia Kelly, brother-in-law Jerry Kelly, sister Kathleen Keil, brother-in-law Dave Keil and son-in-law, Ray Elston.