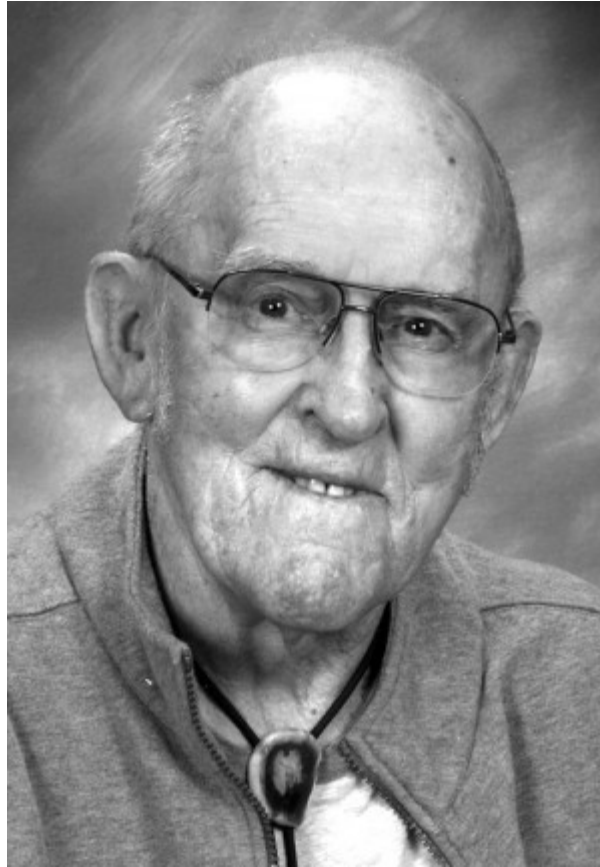


Charles Dulane Fulton, 96



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Charles Dulane Fulton died in his sleep Sunday, Jan.15, 2012, in Kalispell, two days short of his 97th birthday.

The son of Charles and Daisy Fulton, Dulane was born on the family homestead in eastern Montana during a raging blizzard on Jan. 17, 1915. The temperature was 30 below, and the doctor was unable to make it down from Beach, N.D., the nearest town, so a neighbor lady acted as midwife. Dulane grew up on the homestead with older brother Dudley, younger brother Delbert, and sister Gwen. He graduated from high school in Ollie, Mont., where he played basketball and baseball. One of his favorite memories was bundling into a sleigh to ride through a blizzard for the regional basketball tournament in Baker, and playing in gyms so small that home court advantage consisted of knowing where to shoot through the rafters and how to stay away from the wood stove that heated the gym.

After graduating from Ollie High School in 1932, he worked for a year and then decided to go to college at Eastern Montana Normal School, where he had two 4-H scholarships to cover his tuition and a variety of part time jobs to cover room and board. He played basketball for Eastern too, and continued to experience driving through blizzards to the likes of Havre and Great Falls to play ball and, as he said, see a little more of the world.

He graduated with his teaching certificate in 1935, and after an anxious summer in the depths of the Depression, got a call to teach at the Morton School half way between Baker and Ekalaka, where he taught six kids and was paid \$85 a month. The following year he moved to a new teaching job in Somers, and enrolled at the University of Montana, where he finally earned his bachelor's degree in 1940, with majors in history and social studies and minors in English and math. He worked that summer in the mill in Somers where, he said, "As long as you could play baseball you had a job."

The move to Somers, the job in the mill, the enrollment at UM were in large part a result of a 4-H trip he took to Bozeman when he was a sophomore in high school. He said, "One night we went up the Gallatin Canyon on a wiener roast, a whole bunch of us. I saw that Gallatin Canyon up there and I thought you couldn't get any closer to heaven than that, and some time I was going to live in a situation where I could see water coming down and mountains all around."

After he got to the Flathead Valley he never wanted to live anywhere else, although after he graduated from the UM he spent one fateful year in Chinook, teaching English and history and coaching basketball and football. He also met a beautiful, eligible blonde from Ronan who was working for the extension office, and a year later, shortly after Pearl Harbor and a few days before he was to report to Navy boot camp, Benita Lyon and Dulane Fulton were married in Oakland, Calif., on New Year's Eve so as he often said, "I wouldn't forget our anniversary."

Dulane served as a lieutenant in the Navy during the war, serving for almost three years in the Pacific, and participating in the Guam landing and the Battle of Leyte Gulf. He was preparing for the invasion of Japan when the atomic bombs were dropped; knowing that the war would soon be over, he got a jump on some of his brothers in arms and was mustered out at Great Lakes in Chicago in October. He returned to Ronan, picked up Benita, and went to Missoula to finish his master's degree. In 1946 he moved his growing family — which by now had added Bob and Dick — to Columbia Falls where he was first principal, and later superintendent. Daughter Shirley and son Glen were born shortly thereafter.

In Columbia Falls he managed to acquire his first horse since he'd moved off the homestead. Dulane loved horses, and Barb became his favorite trail horse. Barb and Dulane rode throughout the Bob Marshall over the next 50 years — well, Barb didn't make it that long, but Dulane certainly did. One of his proudest moments was when he and a group of hard-leather packers formed the Back Country Horsemen in the early '70s to raise awareness of the jewel that the wilderness area was to Western Montanans. In Columbia Falls Dulane belonged to the Volunteer Fire Department, the local Masonic Lodge, and worked with the Salvation Army.

Dulane retired from teaching in 1973, after a stint as principal at Elrod in Kalispell. He and Benita and four horses retired to a small spread south of Kalispell, where they lived for 40 years, and where Dulane taught eight grandchildren how to ride. Benita died in 2003. Dulane took his last ride in 2005, and finally moved from the spread to Greenwood Assisted Living in 2006. He was well-cared for and thrived on the food and ice cream bars at Greenwood.

He is survived by his sister, Gwen Thibodeau; children Bob, Dick, Shirley and Glen; eight grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

"We'll miss his sunny optimism and his attitude that 'If I'm on the vertical then things must be all right.'"

It was Dulane's wish not to have a service in mid-winter, when his far-flung family and friends would have to brave blizzards for him. A memorial service will be announced later in the spring.

Meanwhile, memorials can be made in Dulane's name to the Flathead Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen, 3115 Middle Road, Columbia Falls, MT 59912-9282; or the First Presbyterian Church, 540 S. Main, Kalispell, MT 59901.