



Kenneth Lyle Ausk, 80, passed away peacefully on December 2 at Kalispell Regional Medical Center following a head injury. Ken was born in Havre, Montana, on September 16, 1934, to Ralph and Anne Marie Ausk. The family lived on the West coast during World War II and Ken moved back to Havre when his mother passed away and was then raised by his Aunt and Uncle, Nick and Mary Schend. He graduated from Havre Central High School in 1953 and joined the U.S. Army serving in Germany until 1956. He returned to Havre and attended Northern Montana College before marrying Phyllis Faber, a local girl from the Bear Paw Mountains. They were blessed with three daughters, Keni, Susan and Theresa. After completing his apprenticeship, Ken continued his career as an electrician working on missile sites and large construction projects in Montana, Wyoming, California, Minnesota and North Dakota. The family moved to the Flathead Valley in 1967 where Ken went to work for Bonneville Power in 1969, retiring in 1995.

Ken and Phyllis enjoyed 57 years of love and dedication, sharing many common interests including raising horses and cows, pack trips into the Bob Marshall Wilderness, hunting, cross-country skiing, hiking, and traveling to Canada and Alaska numerous times to visit their daughters and catch fish. They enjoyed exploring the beautiful country off the beaten path and trying to find old ghost towns was one of their favorite hobbies. 2014 was an especially interesting year for Ken and Phyllis. They made numerous trips to Glacier National Park, including Mass on the beautiful shore of Lake McDonald, watched and judged the world class equine event at Rebecca Farm, and enjoyed visits from their daughter, grandchildren and great grandchildren from Canada. They also traveled to Chattanooga, Tennessee, for the annual Back Country Horsemen meeting, and to Washington, DC, to attend Wilderness Week celebrating the 50th anniversary of The Wilderness Act. Ken loved his surprise 80th birthday party in September and spending a memorable Thanksgiving with family and friends. He was an avid Griz and Wildcat fan and rarely missed attending or tuning in to the games to cheer for his teams.

One of the things Ken was most proud of was his involvement with the Back Country Horsemen. In 1973, Ken and three other gents, Roland Cheek, Dennis Swift, and Dulane Fulton, and their wives formed the organization because they were concerned about the future of stock use in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. The concept of managing Wilderness was new and the founders worked tirelessly to build an organization that would be both supportive, and critical, of the Forest Service on land management issues. Ken volunteered countless hours leading projects to cut out trails and pack supplies for the Forest Service. This small group in Western Montana grew into a national organization, the Back Country Horsemen of America, which is dedicated to keeping America's trails open for recreational stock use. There are currently 174 chapters in 29 states, with roughly 14,000 members. Ken remained an active member, mentor and leader until the time of his death.

Ken was a wonderful and caring husband, father, friend, and horseman. He leaves behind his wife Phyllis; daughter Keni and her husband Ralph Hopkins, and son Taylor, of Columbia Falls; daughter Susan and her husband Wade Hodgson, and son Kyle and Amanda and their children Caden and Cora, of Calgary, Alberta, and daughter Brandy and her children Tyson and Taya, of Olds, Alberta; daughter Theresa and her husband Tom Kolczak, of Columbia Falls; and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins. He will be greatly missed by his family and friends, his horse Red and his little dog Shatzi.