

## Mitchel Joseph Etchart



Mitchel Joseph Etchart was born in Glasgow, Montana on August 11, 1921 to John and Catherine Etchart, Basque immigrants. He passed away on August 13, 2019. He was the third of five children. He grew up in Tampico, Montana and had fond memories of going to school in a one room school house he called "Tampico Tech". He graduated from Glasgow High School with the Class of 1938. He also graduated from St. Thomas College in Minnesota with a degree in Economics.

Mitch's brother Gene taught him to fly at Gene's flying school in Havre in 1940 as part of the Civilian Pilot Training (CPT) program. Gene was an important influence throughout Mitch's life and he always looked up to him. Mitch hauled gas in 5 gallon cans to fuel airplanes to earn money for his lessons. In the spring of 1941 he completed the secondary CPT course at Johnson's Flying Service in Missoula. By July 1941 he had become a certified flight instructor and held a commercial license at the age of 19. Mitch was then a CPT instructor for Lynch's Flying Service in Belgrade, MT until Pearl Harbor.

Mitch entered the Army Air Corps in July 1943. He instructed Primary Air Corps cadets in Stearman biplanes and Basic Training cadets in BT-13s in Lancaster, CA. After World War II ended, he joined the Air Reserve Squadron and served for 20 years. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Air Force.

Mitch Etchart retired from flying in 2009 at the age of 88. He had over 10,000 hours of flight time and was a certified flight instructor with over 69 years of flying experience. Mitch received the Wright Brothers "Master Pilot" Award in 2004. Flying was his true passion.

Mitch returned to the ranch in 1945 upon the death of his father. He and his brother Mark eventually took over Etchart Ranch and enjoyed a lifetime partnership raising sheep and cattle. They were involved in all aspects of the ranch, including sheep and cattle drives. Working together they spent a half century running Etchart Ranch. They weathered northeast Montana's extreme conditions, volatile markets and long distances. Mitch retired from ranching in 1993 when Page Whitham purchased Etchart Ranch.

Mitch met his future bride, Donna Lee Squires, in St. Paul in 1950. They were married in 1952 at St. Raphael's. They raised a family of five children: Danielle, Rita, Paulette, Nancy and Paul. Mitch and Donna had a great life together. They loved traveling, boating at Fort Peck, attending their grandchildren's activities and flying to air shows whenever they could. Sister Ferne and family visited every summer to enjoy the lake with him and his family. Mitch loved his friends and liked to visit and play cards with them. He especially enjoyed his talks with brother Leonard on visits to Billings in later years.

His advice to his children was often "use a little judgement" and the motto he lived by was "keep it simple". His faith, family, flight, friends and fun was the essence of his life.

Etchart was an active member of the community serving on many boards over the years, including the Montana Pilots Association, Montana Stockgrowers, Frances Mahon Deaconess Hospital, Montana Wool Growers Association, the American Legion and many more. He was also President of the Montana Association of State Grazing Districts.

He is predeceased by his wife, Donna Lee; his daughter, Nancy; his parents, John and Catherine; his brothers Gene, Mark and Leonard and his sister, Ferne. He is survived by his children: Danielle (Einar) Anderson, Rita (Mitch) Gallagher, Paulette (Jon Satre) Etchart, and Paul (Barb) Etchart; grandchildren: Angie Watson, Lisa Swanson, Nicole Anderson, Thomas Gallagher, Alyssa Furman, Alex Gallagher, Erik Satre, Aron Satre, Brooke

Satre, Evan Etchart, Emily Etchart and Ethan Etchart; great grandchildren: Quinn Swanson, Lauren Watson, Connor Swanson, Ealin Gallagher and Shelby Metz; sister-in-law Delores Etchart; brother-in-law Leon Squires and many nieces and nephews.

He was a founding member of the Glasgow High School Educational Trust. In lieu of flowers, please send memorials to the GHS Educational Trust, 904 Wedum Drive, Glasgow, Montana 59230.

A Rosary will be prayed 6:00 p.m., Sunday, August 25, 2019 at St. Raphael's Catholic Church in Glasgow, Montana. A Funeral Mass will be 10:00 a.m., Monday, August 26, 2019 at St. Raphael's Catholic Church with Father Jose Valliparambil presiding. Following Mass there will be a reception and fellowship at the Glasgow Elks Lodge. A private family burial is scheduled in Highland Cemetery.