



Delores Ruth Tofte

February 23, 1935 - March 16, 2020

Merle Kenneth Tofte - born July 9, 1933

Delores Ruth (Dee) Tofte - born February 28, 1935

Both passed away on Monday, March 16, 2020. Their cause of death was the COVID-19 virus.

Merle was born in Roseau, Minnesota. He was the youngest of ten children; five girls and five boys. His older brothers played musical instruments and he wanted to do the same. He taught himself to play the guitar at a young age which later, became a major part of his life. Over the years, he played lead guitar in several bands. Merle loved to share the following story... In 1955, his band was playing at Cedarville Park. One night, the famous Willie Nelson came in and sat in with the band. He continued to show up and sit in with the band for several nights. Merle thought he was after his job, so he told him to go to Tiny Dumont's, because they were looking for a guitar player. Willie went there and landed the job. Merle would chuckle and say "I can honestly say that I got Willie Nelson a job". Merle never learned to read a note of music, but wrote songs and played several instruments. Merle enjoyed tinkering with the presses at the print shop. It was said he could fix anything with a paper clip or rubber band. He also loved staying home and watching the Portland Trailblazers play basketball.

Dee was born in Braddock, North Dakota. She was born pre-mature and weighed only three and a half pounds. Her family moved to Grand Coulee, Washington to work on the Grand Coulee Dam. When work ran out, they moved to Astoria, Oregon where she attended grade school. Eventually, her family would move to Portland. Dee attended Jefferson High School. Dee was the matriarch of our family and a stay-at-home mom who relished that role to the fullest. A role that would continue with her grandchildren. Dee planned the family gatherings, pool parties, music parties and family reunions. Dee's greatest joy was spending time with her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Merle and Dee's love story began in the mid 1960's. They had both been married before. Merle had three children; Lori, Jerry and Dale. Dee had two; Patrick and Michelle. Merle's lifelong occupation was in the printing industry, but music played a big part, too. They were married in 1967. In 1968, they bought a printing business - Herren Printing Company. Over the years, Merle continued to play music, but the genre changed from Country Music, to Polka Music. His bands have played at many Oktoberfest's, including Mt. Angel, Oregon. Dee was Merle's biggest fan, but she wanted to be on stage too. She learned to play the drums, and eventually learned to play the keyboard. They formed the band "Dee and Mee". They played at various Eagles lodges, parties, events, and cruise ships, etc. When Dee's health declined, Merle cared for her. He visited her every evening once they could no longer be together. Music continued to play a role in their lives. They often sang their favorite song to family and friends. Merle wrote a simple song for Dee last month. He taught her the words and they would sing it together. Kissing, hugging, holding hands and cuddling were four of their favorite things to do. They were inseparable and their love for one another was an inspiration for those whom witnessed it. In the 52 years they were married, their love and devotion for one another only got stronger.

Merle and Dee will forever be remembered by their children, daughter Lori Kohler and husband Steve, children Robert, Justin, his wife Sarah and their three children; sons Patrick Nusom, Jerry Tofte, and Dale Tofte, his daughter Melissa, husband Joe Liles, and their two children; daughter Michelle Taylor and husband Mark, children Cortney, Matt and Carly. Dee will also be forever remembered by her sister Eileen Wilkerson and her sons, Victor and Gary Wilkerson.

Merle and Dee touched many lives. They have many friends and will be missed. A Celebration of Life will be held for them at a later date pending the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. The family asks that in lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to either Meals On Wheels or The Parkinson's Foundation.