

Thomas Champion

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Thomas A. "Tom" Champion was born March 24, 1925, in Lansing, Mich., to Alice (Madden) and Ralph Champion and grew up on a farm near Lansing. He joined the army in 1944 during WWII. He served at Normandy, was injured and received the Purple Heart. He was a strong supporter of any organization that honors or supports veterans.

He married Jean D. Glover on April 24, 1946, in Weatherford, Texas. Tom and Jean lived in New York, Oregon and cowboied in Arizona before moving to the Custer, S.D., area in 1953.

Tom worked at the Box Factory (an early business in Custer that built wooden boxes) and one of his best memories was working on the construction of Pactola Dam. Later Tom worked for the Forest Service, S.D. Highway Department and the City of Custer. After retirement, he drove a school bus then later started the TC Ranch Horsecamp, a campground for travelers with horses. They hosted campers from all over the U.S. and were even featured on RFD TV as one of Tom Seay's Best of America by Horseback destinations. His favorite part was visiting with the campers, many of whom came back year after year and some even moved to the area.

Tom was active in the VFW, American Legion, Hermosa Volunteer Fire Department and supported scouting and baseball through his grandkids. Their home was always a gathering place for all, including strays, both two-and four-legged.

Tom died Oct., 18, 2011, at his home near Custer. He was 85.

Tom is survived by his wife of 65 years, Jean; daughter, Cheyenne (Cliff) Conry of Belle Fourche, S.D.; son Cody (Peggy) Champion of Rapid City, S.D.; grandsons, Travis (Tatianna) Clarke of Oklahoma City, Okla., Thomas Roy Champion of Fort Hood, Texas, Levi Thomas (Lindsay) Conry of Story, Wyo., Pastor Clay (Miranda) Conry of Belle Fourche; granddaughter, Shannon Champion of Rapid City; and seven great-grandchildren, Steven, Magen, David, Braden, Cooper, Calvin and Presley Jo.

Memorial services were Monday, Oct. 24 at McColley's Chapel of the Hills in Custer with Pastor Clay Conry officiating.

A memorial fund has been established at Telco Federal Credit Union to benefit the Custer VFW Post #3442.

Written condolences may be made at www.mccolleyschapels.com.