

PHIFER, JOHN KNOX
December 29, 1910-August 25, 1958

The community and state sustained a great loss in the sudden death Saturday night of John Knox Phifer, 45, who was killed about 11 o'clock when a tractor overturned with him into an abandoned open pit silo on his ranch east of Wheatland.

The accident occurred when John started with a tractor to pull a stock truck out of sand a short distance up the road. The loaded truck was returning from the cutting horse contest for which he had furnished the stock. When he did not arrive at the truck, the trucker and ranch employees instituted a search which ended at 2:30 at the scene of the accident.

A field of hay adjoining the abandoned pit had been recently mowed, the extending blade also cutting a strip of the growth along one edge of the silo, thus obscuring the true outline of the pit. One track of the tractor went over this edge, which was apparently impossible to see in the dark.

Final tribute was paid in services at 2 o'clock today, August 30 in the Congregational church, the Rev. Anan Inglis officiating. The body lay in state at the church from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Burial was in the family plot at the Wheatland cemetery, and pall bearers were H. Charles Peek, W.C. Walker of Cheyenne, Eldon Johnston, Howard Fish, Arnold Sylvester and Dr. James G. Allison. Organ music was furnished by Mrs. J. A. Corman, and a girls' trio, Coleen and Terry Ferguson and Lorraine Luck sang two numbers. Schraders were in charge of arrangements.

He leaves his wife, Becky; three sons, Thomas Knox, stationed at Kent air base, England, Fred of Laramie and Zack of Wheatland; and four grandchildren, Viviann in England and Wood, Brook and Sky in Laramie. His parents, Dr. and Mrs. Fred Phifer and his brother, Wood Phifer and wife were drowned in the swollen creek waters south of Chugwater in 1935.

John was born December 29, 1910 in Wheatland, the younger of two sons of Dr. F.W. Phifer and Mrs. Phifer who came to Wheatland from Statesville, N.C. in 1907.

John spent his childhood in Wheatland and was graduated from Wheatland high school in 1930. He toured Europe the summer following with his cousin, Bob Giffen.

As a young man, and at the death of his parents and his brother, Wood, John was called upon to assume the responsibility of the management of the Platte Holding and Investment company and the Wheatland General hospital which his father founded. This he ably did for a number of years.

Since 1952 he had engaged exclusively in the cattle raising business, living on the Phifer home ranch, the bard Arrow on Chugwater creek east of town.

He served fourteen years in the Wyoming State Legislature both as a Representative and as a Senator from Platte county. During this time he once served as chairman of the State Interim committee. He sat on the city council of Wheatland for eight years from June 1, 1940 to June 1, 1948.

For thirty-four years, John was an active, sincere and devout member of the First congregational church of Wheatland. He filled every layman's capacity in the church and was one of its deacons at the time of his death.

He was a member of Wheatland Blue Lodge No. 16, A.F. and A.M., the

Consistory and a Shriner, belonging to Korein Temple of Rawlins. He held membership in the Royal Court of Jesters No. 148. He was a member of the Wheatland Lions' club and of the Wheatland Chamber of Commerce.

He belonged to the Mountain View Farm Bureau, Wyoming Stock Growers Association, the American National Stock Association and the Platte County Stock Association. He was a supervisor for the Soil Conservation Service.

He was a charter member of and organized the Wyoming Flying Farmers in 1948 and was serving the National Flying Farmers as director of District Seven. He helped to organize two provinces in Canada, Alberta and Saskatchewan for Flying Farmers.

To this organization he devoted hours of his effort. At the recent National Convention of Flying Farmers which he attended in New Orleans, he was honored by the presentation of a plaque and a standing ovation of the delegation for his outstanding achievement in promoting flying in agriculture.

He took an active part in Boys' State in which he so thoroughly believed, giving his counsel to the young citizens of tomorrow.

John was a worker in any organization to which he belonged. Not only did he give untiringly of his time and thought to each organization but he was never too busy to give of himself to individuals who were in sorrow or in need of his help.

At the time of his death he was once more seeking to serve his county as a representative to the Wyoming State Legislature. Only recently he had been instrumental in arranging meetings leading to construction of a proposed dam on the McLeod site southwest of Wheatland.

John Phifer was a young pioneer of pioneering parents, but above all else he had great faith, integrity and the courage to be himself and to labor unceasingly for the things in which he believed. His years, though relatively short, were fully and usefully lived and he leaves a heritage of friendship and service seldom found in a much longer lifetime.