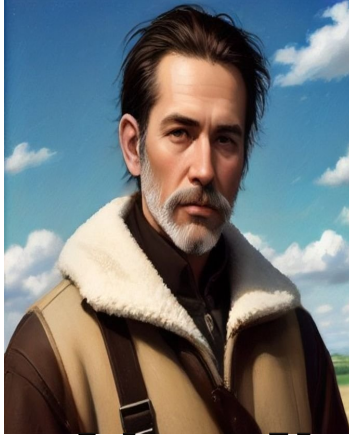




Cletus Wayne Kembel

January 7, 1943 - August 19, 2026

Great Falls, Montana

Cletus Wayne Kembel died in Great Falls on August 19, 2026. He was eighty-three. Born there on January 7, 1943, he grew up knowing wind as a work schedule, not a conversation. His father kept a heating-oil truck running in weather that punished hesitation. Cletus learned a socket set before he learned a highway south.

He spent most of his adult life on a small airfield at the edge of town, first as a line kid dragging hoses, later as the mechanic who could hear a tired magneto before the logbook admitted it. He did not fly for a living. He kept other people's airplanes from becoming stories. Crop-dusters called him because he would ground a machine even when the charter money was already promised. He kept a coffee can of AN hardware and a refusal to charge a ranch clinic what a catalog said a hose was worth.

He married June Kembel in 1965. They raised two sons in a house that needed a new mudroom every decade. June taught at the elementary. Cletus packed her lunches with the same seriousness he packed a toolbox. After his hands stiffened he still came out for a favorite Cessna, moving slower, swearing with more precision.

Friends remember a man who would jump a truck at twenty below without calling it a favor, who could sit through a long potluck without making the wind a personality, and who owned one good parka. He liked the river in late April, when the ice finally argued with itself, and a slice of pie he never quite finished. He died in Great Falls, the only latitude he had ever needed. The hangar light is off. A lot of small planes still start because he was stubborn about a job.

Services

A memorial in Great Falls. A walk to the field afterward if the weather allows. A gift to a rural medevac fund

suits him.

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