

February 13, 2013

The Life of Carroll "Cal" Wagner

- A Celebration of life for Carroll "Cal" Wagner, 89, of Groton, will be 10:30 a.m., Friday, February 15th at St. John's Lutheran Church, Groton. Rev. Craig Grams will officiate. Burial will follow in Union Cemetery.
- Visitation will be held at the church on Thursday from 5-7 p.m. with a prayer service at 7 p.m.
- Cal died February 9, 2013 at Golden Living Center, Groton.
- On April 27, 1923, Carroll Michael Wagner was born by the hands of his father, in a farmhouse near Putney. He was the 7th child of 9 children born to William and Laura (Schmidt) Wagner. Baptized in



the home of his grandfather, Fred Schmidt near Ferney, he continued his faith journey on his own, getting confirmed in 1937 at St John's Lutheran Church in Groton.

- Cal was raised on various farms north of Andover, South Dakota. At the age of 14, he left home, after modifying a horse-drawn trailer to have rubber tires, to pick corn by hand with others for hire.

- He then worked various farms in SD and MN, eventually moving to Chicago to construct home foundations. His travel methods included hitchhiking and jumping trains with his older brother Paul (some going the wrong direction). He left Chicago in 1941 to join his brothers in San Francisco, where he became a ship-shell welder during WWII. In 1943, the Draft Board sent him back to farm. He rented for one season, purchased the current home-site the following year, and actively farmed until the end - 70 seasons.

- Throughout his life, Cal was insistent on doing things himself. He constructed buildings, including the foundation, framing, wiring, plumbing, and even did finish carpentry when needed. He had a weakness for owning latest farm machinery, so much that he built his own when something wasn't available. His love for John Deere equipment began in 1943, with the purchase of his first piece of new equipment - a steel wheeled "B" John Deere tractor and 2-bottom plow. He kept all his equipment current, including a recent order for delivery this spring. His skills for straight planting had vendors understanding why he did not need GPS.

- On October 7th, 1944, Cal eloped with his childhood friend Adelia (Billie) Emmen, beginning a true love affair and partnership that lasted over 68 years. Throughout

their marriage, he lovingly called her "his bride." They shared everything; working side-by-side on the farm, raising children, traveling, and of course a love of dancing.

- In 1979, Cal and Billie began their "semi-retirement" by spending winters in Texas. They wintered down south every year, with Cal returning each season, recharged for another year of farming. In 1990, Cal and Billie built a house in Groton, but Cal continued to farm each day. When asked about working alone on the farm, he would reply, "The good Lord and I are working together."

- In addition to farming, Cal provided community service as a School Board Member from 1951 to 1964, a Lutheran Church Board member for 8 years, the Farming Township Supervisor for 21 years, and a part-time employee of Day County ASCS. He also helped many local farm families in need and was a resource for the "young ones" starting out.

- Celebrating his life through memories is his wife Adelia (Billie) of Groton, SD, his three sons, Mike (Linda) of Sioux Falls, SD, David (Denise) of Hulett, Wyo., and Steve (Laura) of Rapid City, SD., nine grandchildren: Timothy (Heidi) Wagner of Boise, ID, Michelle Lewis of Colorado Springs, CO, Justin (Sylvia) Wagner of Wernitzgrun, Germany, Jodi (Tom) Edwards of Decker, MT, Jared Wagner of Hulett, Wyo, Paul (Dawn) Wagner of Arvada, CO, Jennifer (William) Williams of Rapid City, SD, Rachel (Tyler) Crow of Rapid City, SD, Christopher (Jacquelyn) Wagner of St. Paul, MN and eleven great-grandchildren: Kaitlyn, Blake, Will, Hardy, Evan, Ryan, Jacob, Eric, Josie, Lauren and Megan.

- Preceding him in death were his parents and his siblings: George, Paul, Adolph, Henry, Arthur, Lyle, Eunice Collins and Marcella Henslin.

- Honorary Casketbearers will be all of Cal's grandchildren.

- Casketbearers will be Kent Schuster, Jeff Larson, Terry Cutler, Bob Osterman, Art Gengerke and Terry Wagner.

- Memorials may be directed to Groton Community Transit, PO Box 693 or St. John's Lutheran Preschool, PO Box 348, Groton, SD 57445.