

Obituaries

Lester Milo Confer

Feb. 13, 1909 - May 31, 2012

Lester Milo Confer died in St. Francis on May 31, 2012, at the age of 103. He was born on Feb. 13, 1909, in Cheyenne County, Kan., to Earl and Zora Taylor Confer.

When he was 8 years old, he was working in the fields behind the horses and plow. He and his father built the family home, making the bricks themselves by building the forms, then going to the pasture with the horse and wagon to load the sand. His father taught him the trade of blacksmithing and farming.

He married Mattie Brooks and they had a daughter, Arlene. During the Depression, Lester, Mattie and Arlene went to Oregon. He worked in the apple orchards, threshed wheat and anything he could do to make money while living in a tent part of the time, sleeping on the ground or in the back of the truck. A family looked after Arlene while he and Mattie worked during the day. The family wanted them to stay but the love of the land and Kansas was too powerful so, eventually, he earned enough money for them to come back to Cheyenne County.

When U.S. 36 west of St. Francis and Highway 27 north were being built, he worked as a laborer, then a boss, overseeing many of the projects including the installation of the stop signs from the side roads on Highway 27.

They purchased some dairy cows and built a dairy. But, he was forced to give up the dairy during the Dirty 30s and Depression years.

Mattie's parents had given a house to the couple. Before moving the house from Colorado, he had dug a basement by hand.

Lester worked in the light plant for the city. He also owned and operated the Confer Ice Plant with the ice being used for ice boxes which was a common form of refrigeration in those days. He, Mattie and Arlene would deliver ice from St. Francis to Benkelman, and to places in Colorado.

During this time, the Flood of 1935 came through St. Francis. He helped many people to safety.

When it was obvious that the refrigerator was coming into the

picture, he sold the business and bought a farm north of St. Francis. Again, he bought the cows and established a dairy. But, tragedy struck when fire took their home and buildings. They rebuilt the house and this time, the dairy barn had automatic milkers, stanchions for the cows and a milk room where a refrigeration unit kept the milk cool until the trucks collected it.

They eventually sold the dairy and moved to town where they built one house, then built another southwest of St. Francis. During this time, he was the chief of police. He became the mail carrier for Jaqua Star Route, a job which lasted 23 years. He loved raising Black Angus cattle and pigs. He got rid of the bull snakes by placing a wooden egg in a hen's nest so that when the snake swallowed them, thinking they were real, would not survive.

He taught his grandchildren, Bobby, David, Kari and Dustin how to hunt, dig out baby coonotes, mow the lawn and take care of the little and big engines. He built them a one-of-a-kind swing out of an old bed spring hung from a tree on all four corners with a rope until, one day, it dumped Kari. Then he put up a store-bought swing set.

They rebuilt car engines in his garage, getting oil and dirt everywhere, making him grumpy, but then having his picture taken with them with a smile that said he was proud of them.

Following Mattie's death, Lester married Gladys Kanel Edmonds. He and Gladys moved to town into a house with a small yard but with enough space so they could plant a couple of tomatoes plants and some hills of cucumbers.

He still had his pasture south of town that he had built up, calling it "Confer's Hideaway." Lester's handmade windmill still stands along with the trees he planted and the ponds he had dug. Making sure it survives, his great-grandson, David, continually works there when he is in St. Francis. Lester had several mishaps while at his hideaway including falling on his head into the pond. David would often pick Lester up and they would sit in the pickup for hours, dream-

ing what to do next and how to do it.

Poor health forced Lester and Gladys to move to an apartment at the Good Samaritan Village but he insisted that he wanted an apartment that looked to the east in order to see the traffic on the highway and the action at the sale barn and airport.

Gladys died in 2004 and he required more care. However, he was able to see and talk to people as he roamed around the airport and Village areas on his "pony" (his motorized buggy).

He eventually needed more care and Kathy Biggs became his favorite person as she shared her companionships and compassion.

Lester suffered great sorrow over the loss of his granddaughter, Peggy, the tragic death of his great-grandson, Bobby, the loss of both of his wives and his only child, Arlene.

He leaves his granddaughter, Glenda and husband, Gaylord, of St. Francis; and great-grandchildren, David and wife, Dee, of Hays; Kari and husband, Tracy, of Trenton, Neb.; and Dustin Krien of St. Francis.

His joys were his great-great-grandchildren, Chase, Kensley, Kylie and Tracen, and step-great-great-grandchildren, Chanell, Chantell, Madison and Taran. He slept away when his great-great-great-step-granddaughter, Adalyn Kay Heyl was born. He adored the twin great-great-grandchildren, Josie Ryann and Harper Rylee, playing his harmonica and singing to them whenever they were around.

He also leaves the memories of shared time with the children of Greg and Chris Peter, Justin and wife, Megan, Chad and wife, Annie, Brittani Peter, Peggy Gross and her children, Lauren and Bret.

Funeral service for Lester was held June 2 at the United Methodist Church with Rev. Warren Cico officiating. Honorary pallbearers were his grandchildren, Dustin Krien, Tracy Peter, Chase Krien, Terry Culwell and Rick Rogers. Burial was in the St. Francis Cemetery.

Arrangements were made by Knodel Funeral Home, St. Francis.

Arrilla May O'Leary Zimbelman, 93, of Farmington, Ark., died Thursday, April 5, 2012, in Fayetteville, Ark., at the Willard Walker Hospice Home. She was born July 12, 1918, in LuVerne, Iowa; to parents Albert Dally and Lucinda (Will) Dally.



Zimbleman

She is survived by a daughter, Cathy Rigby, of Farmington, son, Michael O'Leary and wife, Kathy, of Lenexa, step-daughters, Val Jean Schultz of St. Francis, Loretta Sidman and husband, Von, of The Dallas, Ore., step-son, Marvin Zimbelman and wife, Donna, of St. Francis, step-son, Kenneth Zimbelman and wife, Susie, of Ozark, Mo., sister, Charlotte Wickwar and husband, Bus, of San Antonio, Texas, brother, Donald Dally and wife, Evelyn, of Albany, Ga., daughter-in-law, Rita O'Leary McGuire and husband, Ed, of Point Arena, Calif., sister-in-laws, Dorothy Zimbelman of Burlington, Colo., and Ruth Zimbelman of Boulder, Colo., brother-in-laws Dale Redding of Ashford, Ore., Raymond Zimbelman of St. Francis.

Arrilla was blessed with a combination of grandchildren from marriages, 17 grandchildren and 35 great-grandchildren, and 15 great-great-grandchildren. She also leaves many cousins, nieces and nephews and dear friends including her often mentioned "my other daughter" Maggie Fair Skalka.

Arrilla was preceded in death by her parents, two infant siblings, husbands Edwin O'Leary and Emil Zimbelman, sister Lucille Kanel and husband Lynn, sister Dorothy Redding, a son Eugene O'Leary, son-in-law Pat Rigby and step-son-in-law Rueben Schultz, step-granddaughters Jan Schultz and Tina Wright, step-great-granddaughter Jodie Lynn Schultz and many sister-in-laws and brother-in-laws from both marriages.

Arrilla grew up in Iowa and at the age of 13 moved to Northwest Kansas with her family. In the book "Cheyenne County History," she tells of moving to Northwest

Arrilla O'Leary Zimbelman

July 12, 1918 - April 5, 2012

Kansas with two boxes on the outside of the car for their dogs. She often talked about having to leave her dolls as they had no room. She attended grade school at Wheeler, and White Rose. She finished high school in St. Francis, graduating in 1939, the same year as her sister, after staying out for a year to earn money.

Arrilla worked at the Angel Café for Mildred Angel and she was working for many families after high school, one was the Lydia O'Leary family where she met and later married Edwin O'Leary in October of 1941, one of the sons.

They lived on a farm in Nebraska near Doane, after their marriage. Edwin purchased a farm in Kansas later that year and they moved there in March of 1942.

This union produced three children Cathy, Eugene and Michael. They remained on the farm until 1960 when they sold the farm and bought the Hilltop Motel and Grocery in St. Francis. Edwin died that summer and she and her children ran the business with the help of some very loyal employees. Two of which were daughters of the former owner, Jake Schleppe.

She sold the business several years later and started working at the Palace Market. Arrilla then moved with her 13-year-old son to Hays to be a housemother for the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity at Fort Hays State University. She attended college there and was proud of the four hours she earned while a house mother and of the golf lessons she took and later taught to her son.

Arrilla was courted by a former neighbor from St. Francis and moved back to St. Francis and married Emil Zimbelman. They were married for many years and after his death, she remained in St. Francis until 2008 when she moved closer to her daughter in Fayetteville.

Arrilla lived at Peachtree Village in Farmington, near her daughter and enjoyed her games of cards, Bingo, music groups, Bible study and activities with her church Central Methodist in Fayetteville with all of the friends she made. She was able to get to know two of her great-grandchildren and they loved their "Gee Gee." The only negative was being away from all of her friends and other family members.

Arrilla was a seamstress and made many pretty quilts, every baby born into her immediate family up until this last August received a baby quilt from Grandma Zimbelman and every grandchild who got married received a quilt that she had made. She made dolls from heirloom handkerchiefs, many wooden crafts, jewelry, and also was a good artist and painter. She loved to sing and play the guitar and was in a dance band in the late 1930s and early 40s with Mr. Greene, whom she spoke of fondly.

She was a member of the South Fork Circle, South Fork Unit, Business and Professional Women, United Methodist Women, Methodist Church, was a song leader at the Good Samaritan Village, was a 4-H leader, Scout leader, was one of the founding members of the Thrift Store where she worked and sorted for many years, she also worked for many years, approximately 17, for former St. Francis residents Roger and Dottie Lewis at their two places of business.

Arrilla met many young people at this position and many of them kept in touch with her over the years. Her grandchildren were thrilled to come to St. Francis and go get ice cream at the Dairy King from Grandma. Arrilla was very proud of the fact she was a deputy sheriff for Emil for a while and would show her badge to anyone who wanted to see it. She was a cancer survivor and walked the Relay for Life for many years.

Arrilla loved St. Francis and called everyone there or in Cheyenne County her "Best Friend." In a book found after her death she had written that what she wanted for her children was "health, education and friends," and she fulfilled that with all three. They were educated, had many friends and until ALS took the life of Eugene, they were relatively healthy. She also had stated that she was so glad to be a grandmother.

A memorial service will be Saturday, July 7, at 10:30 a.m. at the Methodist Church. Burial will be in the St. Francis Cemetery. Memorials may be made to the ALS Association or the Willard Walker Hospice Home in Fayetteville.

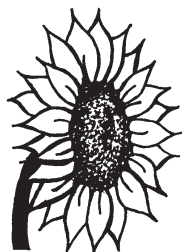
Memorial service and interment is under the direction of Knodel Funeral Home, St. Francis.

Upcoming Promotions

For more information contact Tim Burr at:

The Saint Francis Herald

P.O. Box 1050, St. Francis, KS 67757 785-332-3162



Freedom Section

Featuring those who have served our country and a salute to the United States' Freedom

ALUMNI!!!!!!

The St. Francis Community High School's Alumni Reunion is set for June 16. This year's honored classes: 1937, 1942, 1947, 1952, 1957, 1962, 1967, 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992 and 2002 will be featured in The Saint Francis Herald the first part of July. An issue to treasure!



Baseball & Swim Team Pages

Featuring kids in summer activities



Changing the landscape of
Healing

Please join us as we celebrate
The Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting of the Facility Master Plan Phase II Project

Featuring
Community Hospital's Surgery Wing and Healing Garden

Sunday, July 1, 2012
1 p.m.

*Community Hospital
Prairie View Conference Room
1301 East H Street
McCook, Nebraska*

Program to start promptly at 1:00 p.m. with remarks from Senator Ben Nelson and Lieutenant Governor Rick Sheehy.

After the program, enjoy refreshments and tours of the Surgery Wing and Healing Garden.

Parking is available in the front hospital parking lot and on H Street.

COMMUNITY HOSPITAL
Advanced care. Always there.

1301 East H Street - McCook, NE 69001 - 308-344-2650
www.chmccook.org

