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12/26/2012 - Harry B. Hanson



Funeral services for Harry B. Hanson of Gordon, Nebraska will be held on Thursday, December 27, 2012 at 2:00 PM at the United Methodist Church in Gordon with Reverend Fred Andersen and Reverend Al Trucano officiating.

Burial will be at the Gordon Cemetery.

A memorial has been established for the Tri-State Cowboys Museum or the Gordon Volunteer Fire Department. Donations may be sent to Chamberlain Pier Funeral Home, PO Box 336, Gordon, NE 69343.

Online condolences can be made at www.chamberlainchapel.com

Harry Benjamin Hanson was born in a sod house on August 24, 1914, and raised on a small farm in a Norwegian settlement north of Glenham, South Dakota. He was the 2nd child of four born to Engval and Blanche (Arnold) Hanson. Harry was raised during hard times and was only able to attend school through the 8th grade. As was in those days, the main entertainment was neighborly house or barn dances which Harry would attend with his family. While other children played, Harry would sit watching and listening to the fiddlers as they played the old dance tunes. After first attempting to fabricate a fiddle from a cigar box, his family helped him obtain one by selling Cloverine Salve. He earned enough money to purchase his first violin for the mere sum of \$2.00 from the Montgomery Ward catalog, and by the age of 7, he was taking turns playing with the adult fiddlers, standing on a chair because of his small stature. Many elders claimed he was better than his elders even at that early age and in these times, he would have been deemed a child protégé. Of course, music lessons were not available, so playing by ear was Harry's style.

His teenage years were spent working hard on various farms, picking corn by hand, cutting timber, and joining the Civilian Conservation Corps. After being discharged from the CCC's, he obtained employment with his cousin, Lawnie Beed, at Valentine, Nebraska where he worked until moving to Gordon, Nebraska, where his excellent mechanical skills landed him a job as shop foreman for Miller Brothers Chevrolet. It was in Gordon where he met a local farm girl, Ruth Kayton. The two were married on January 21, 1938, and with both being very frugal, managed to save enough for a down payment on their first quarter of farm land in 1943. It was at that time that he began building his own farming operation while running a repair shop in town and doing custom trucking. Although long hours of hard work and dedication to his family took the majority of his time, he still managed to play the fiddle and for many years had one of the top country and western dance bands in the Midwest, backing up many great stars as they came through the country making personal appearances.

It was not until Harry was in his late forties that he had the time to practice long hours and began entering distant contests, many on the national level. Since that time he racked up scores of championships and became known as the "Fiddling Wheat Farmer," the pride of his hometown of Gordon. Perhaps one of the greatest attributes of this multi-talented man, was his philanthropy, as he not only donated generously to his church and favorite charities but also spent countless hours entertaining folks in nursing homes in area communities, veterans homes, and various other church and civic events, all without accepting any compensation.

Harry departed this life on December 21, 2012, at Countryside Care in Gordon, Nebraska.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother, Albert; sisters, Ruth and Lou Etta, and his beloved wife of 72 years, Ruth.

He is survived by his four daughters, Marilyn Gruenig and her husband, Gene of Rapid City, SD; Mary Lou Anderson and her husband, Roy of Gordon; Carol Pedersen and her husband, Michael of Hopkins, MN; and Yvonne Hollenbeck and her husband, Glen of Clearfield, SD. He is also survived by five grandchildren, Debbie Thompson, Bart Weaver, Shelley Shepherd, Teresa Halley and Shari Sandoz; and his step-grandchildren, Tim Anderson and Kathy Bate, Kim Guerra, Kelene Zamora, and Keith Gruenig; and Shawn and Jay Hollenbeck; his great-grandchildren and a host of nieces and nephews.

Chamberlain Pier Funeral Home of Gordon is in charge of arrangements.