

Introduction

*Funeral services were held on Sat., Mar. 16, at 11 a.m.
at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Buffalo....
In a tribute to her father, Linda Mainquist wrote,*

My father's grip on life was as sure as his grip on the lines of his mules. He had an unspoken faith that if you worked hard, enjoyed simple pleasures and treated people decently, life would be all right. These things were free, to be had for the taking. That's all it took for him to be happy.

My father got what he called his "hankering for registered Holsteins" as a little boy when he was responsible for the family calves. His interest, skill and hard work led to excellence. In 1964 he was the first farmer to win the Premier Dairyman Award--a county-wide honor. My father was quietly proud of Inka, the founding dam of his prize-winning dairy herd.

My father was also a superb bus driver. He learned the name of each of his 60 riders and greeted each my name every morning. "Good morning, Wendy!" The John Koch girls gave my dad a key chain that their father had engraved, "World's Best Bus Driver." Dad carried the key chain every day of his life.

My dad found joy in simple pleasures like playing pool at the Senior Citizens' Center, singing in the St. John's men's choir, having breakfast with his school bus-driving buddies, or riding in the saddle club. He also enjoyed going to baseball games with his brothers Roy and Allen or chatting with his sisters Mary and Dora. Of course, he loved to warm up my mother's car, buy her roses for no reason, and give her extra-special cards.

Dad never retired completely because he liked farming. Until the very end he raised calves, kept a garden and tilled corn with his mules. And he always had to have his potato pancakes crispy brown at Perkins.

He delighted in pleasing children. Last New Year's, my father and mother phoned their granddaughters, Erin and Caroline, in Chicago. My parents had a plan to entertain the little girls. They let their dog Lucky in the kitchen and got Erin and Caroline on the phone. Mom got Lucky to speak while my father held the phone to Lucky's mouth. Then Dad got on the phone and asked the girls, "Do you know what Lucky's saying?" He paused a moment, "He's saying, 'Happy New Year!'" My folks made a great team.

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No one can forget my dad's mules, Minnie and Molly. Dad delighted in planting and cultivating corn with them and giving buggy rides in the summer or bobsled rides in the winter.

Dad and Minnie and Molly were at their best in the farmer's hitch contest at the Wright County Fair. Four of the five years my father competed he won first place. One year the judge told him to drive the mules to face the audience. Then the judge told him to drop the lines. Dad had no control over Minnie and Molly--only complete faith. That dusk the audience held its breath and the mules stood still. The judge said, "I knew they could do it," later adding, "It couldn't have been done better."

My father treated people well. Everyone who knows him knows how good it felt to be with him. It was a joy to see him coming with his bandy legs, grandpa paunch, and year-round farmer-red face. And if you saw a man with red suspenders and a snappy cap from a distance, you knew who it was.

When my father talked to you, he dropped all self-interest, devoted his attention to you, and delighted in your company. No matter who you were, he paid you the respect of treating you as his equal--no more and no less. He was a gentleman of the highest quality.

One summer evening when I was very young, I watched my father work in the barn. It had rained and the air was fresh and clean. Dad looked out the west door of the barn, He said, "Linda, come look." It was my first rainbow, its colors were bright, and the arch was nearly complete.

Dad did other acts of kindness and joy many times a day, whether it was taking time to talk to someone, giving the Lanigan girls apples, or picking pussy willows for my mother. These small acts, however, were significant. His love and joy made a difference in all our lives.

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