

Obituary

Leonard M. Becwar

Leonard Mike Becwar was born August 22, 1924 to Mollie (Kuska) and Mike Becwar, Jr. on a farm north of Milligan and passed away on Sunday, March 2, 2008 at the Friend Manor in Friend at the age of 83 years 6 months and 11 days. He attended rural school Dist #6 north of Milligan and graduated with the Class of 1941 from Milligan High School. After graduation Leonard farmed with his father. On August 28, 1945, he was united in marriage to DeLores "Dee" Witfoth at the Methodist Parsonage in Friend and to this union three children, Kenneth, Dawn and Mark were born.

They began their married life farming south of Friend and south of Exeter before moving to Ohiowa. Leonard worked with the NKC Grain Company and managed Ace Supply at Fairmont. He transferred to Salina, Kan. with Simpson, Laybourn, Miller and Stark and traveled throughout Nebraska and Kansas developing many long-time friendships with the elevator operators. In 1958, he returned to Fairmont to manage the Ace Supply Co at the airbase.

After a retina detachment, he moved to his parent's home place north of Milligan. Always with a positive attitude and never one to let life get the best of him, he started a small musical combo with his Uncle Frank. His daughter and son would fill in when Uncle Frank couldn't play. Leonard had always loved music and his father taught him to play the button accordion before he started to school, allowing him to play with his father at dances. Because of poor eyesight, he learned to play by ear and his high school music teacher noted that he was an excellent musician and encouraged him.

He purchased the LB Inn in Milligan where he enjoyed visiting with friends and hosting bands. Unable to drive, Leonard started a recording business "LB Tapes" recording small combos and groups. After successful eye surgery he sold the bar and traveled the area selling for Zenith Pictorial and Waco Advertising. Leonard also started The Leonard Becwar Orchestra known as the "The LB Band" which played for wedding and anniversary dances and more. Leonard also sang with the Milligan Czech Brass Band for several years. At a Doane Czech Program, when he was absent due to ill health, his chair was filled with a small black teddy bear donning a similar band vest and a tiny accordion with the Becwar name on it. Leonard's love for polka music gained him a spot in the Polka Hall of Fame in Omaha and also as a charter member of the Musicians' Hall of Fame at Milligan.

After an invitation to sponsor a tour to the Oktoberfest in Munich Germany, Leonard and Dee started a tour business, arranging more than 90 tours over 20 years. Many local area people traveled with him to Czechoslovakia, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and Austria, along with sightseeing tours to Canada and most of the US. Polka tours covered Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Idaho and Southern states.

Leonard was a member the Milligan Town Board, Milligan Fire and Rescue and the Milligan Community Club where he enjoyed his part in organizing the Centennial Celebration of Milligan in 1988. He also was a

member and past Grand Chancellor of the Knights of Pythias. Leonard was a member of the Milligan United Methodist Church and later transferred to the Friend United Methodist Church.

In 2005, Leonard and Dee moved to Friend and on March 1st, 2006, Leonard was admitted to the Friend Manor where he enjoyed the activities. Leonard and Dee had enjoyed entertaining at the Friend Manor for several years and often he entertained with his accordion while a resident the past two years.

Leonard is survived by his wife, DeLores "Dee", Friend, daughter and son-in-law Dawn and Douglas Mundt, Crete, son, Mark Becwar, Lincoln, seven grandchildren, their spouses and great grandchildren include Shannon and Shaun Mee, and their children, Autumn, Allison, Austin, Ashlyn and Aiden, Colorado Springs Colo., Jennifer Becwar and Matt Daringer and their children, Scoie and Cooper, Lincoln, Kamron Becwar, Seattle, Wash., Chad and Keri Becwar and their children Austin and Jordyn, Lincoln, Chandler Becwar, Wray, Colo., Jarod and Stacey Mundt, Papillion, Julie and Jared Rohrs, Lincoln, sister-in-law and spouse, Irene and Vern Hartman, Davenport, and a host of other relatives and friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Mike and Mollie Becwar, son and daughter-in-law, Kenneth and Sandy Becwar, brother LeRoy Becwar and parents in-law, Clarence and Bertha Witfoth.

A Funeral Service was held at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 05, 2008, at the Milligan Auditorium in Milligan with Rev. Dr. Paixao Baptista officiating. Sue Underwood, read the obituary and gave a Eulogy. Interment was in the Bohemian National Cemetery at Milligan. Visitation was at Lauber-Moore Funeral Home, Friend on Tuesday and one hour before service at Milligan. The family greeted friends and relatives from 4-6 p.m. at the Funeral Home on Tuesday. Memorials have been established to the Friend United Methodist Church, the Warren Memorial Hospital Foundation or directed in care of the family. Pallbearers were Gayle Becwar, Galen Kuska, Jon Halama, Billy Slezak III, Roger Brandt and Steve Rodenbaugh. Everyone who has ever played with the Becwar Band were honored guests. Sue Underwood and Galen Beck sang "When Our Paths Meet" and "Pisnicka Ceska" in both Czech and English and they were accompanied by Kelly Homolka and Randy Korbelik on the accordions. Pianist, Deb Brunkow, accompanied the congregation as they sang "Because He Lives". Prelude music was a CD of Leonard's music recorded at an event in Milligan. The Recessional was an "accordion jam" by several area accordion players. Condolences may be sent to the family at laubermore.com.