

100 YEARS

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14 until he was 30. Games were played where the airport south of St. Francis is now located. The area was infested with rattlesnakes so, while they were playing, they also had to keep an eye out for snakes as well as the ball.

During that time, he met Mattie Brooks at an Armel School dance and the courtship began. In 1929, they were married. They lived in the big house on the farm with his parents and some of his siblings until the family moved. During that time, their daughter, Arlene was born.

They moved to the Guemsey place and ran a dairy but, the Dirty 30s had arrived and they were forced to sell. In 1935, the family headed west to Washington. They were there for a year. Lester pitched shocks of wheat to a thresher machine for 40 days. He also harvested apples while Mattie worked in a pear factory. All three picked hops for beer trying to make enough money to come back home to Cheyenne County.

On their return to St. Francis, Lester ran an ice plant for 13 years and worked in the power plant. Mattie's father gave them a house but it was in Colorado. They had the house moved 30 miles. Lester dug the 14-by 20-foot basement by hand and the house was put it down east of the power plant. (Helene Landenberger now lives there.) The house was insulated with sawdust from Cliff Keeler's building shop.

He helped the highway department build Scoby Hill west of St. Francis (now known as the Zwegygart's hill near Roger Zwegygart's farm). The work was done mostly with shovels and sweat, he said.

He worked with the surveyor on K-27 north of St. Francis to Haigler. He made fills between the county roads and the highway and reset the stop signs along the way when the highway department had put them on the wrong sides of the road.

In 1942, he and Mattie bought land north of St. Francis where Tom and Lois Sharp now live. While in town one night, lightning struck the house and burned it to the ground. They rebuilt the house and lived there until 1956, then moved into St. Francis.

Lester changed occupations and was now working for the postal service carrying mail and was a police chief.

They purchased land southwest of St. Francis from Deroy Danielson in the late 1950s. They built their house naming the place "Nob Hill Ranch." They moved in buildings north of



Lester shown with one of the windmill he built.

the house for chickens and pigs. He raised 25 black Angus cows and calves. There were 200 pigs raised from 12 sows.

In 1984, Lester earned the Soil Conservation Award for "Confer's Hideaway" which is located in the pasture east of the house. One of several windmills built by Lester stands at the ponds. He built it by hand, laid on the ground. Gib Schoenrogge then brought his rig over and set it up.

From 1936 to 1961, pheasant hunters from Kingman arrived to hunt. After the fire burned down their house north of town, the hunters bought a new shotgun for Lester and a rocking chair for Mattie. Dr. J.H.A. Peck, knowing how much Lester loved to hunt, gave Lester a gun the day after the fire.

From the time he was a youth in school to later in his life, Lester trapped skunks, badgers, coons and coyotes. There was a bounty paid on the pelts and baby coyote ears.

Mattie died of cancer in 1964. In 1965, Lester married Gladys Ed-



Lester, Maddie and Arlene Confer



FIVE GENERATION — Back row: Arlene Peter, Bobby Krien, Glenda Krien; seated: Lester Confer holding Chase.

monds.

Today, as Lester is riding around the county, he loves to tell stories about who lived where. He well remembers his threshing days and enjoys reliving them through stories he tells to his granddaughter and grandchildren.

His family consists of daughter, Arlene; granddaughter, Glenda; grandchildren: Bobby, who died in 1999; David, Kari and Dustin. He also has four great-grandchildren:

Chase, Kensley, Kylie and Tracer.

His family is holding a birthday party for him from 2 to 4 p.m. on Saturday at the Cheyenne Manor, 200 N. Ash in St. Francis. Friends and relatives are urged to stop by. Cards can reach him at 315 Village Rd. #14, St. Francis, KS 67756.

Editor's note: The above article was taken from Glenda Krien's notes she took as Lester talked.

ZWEYGARDT

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ger peach orchard across the road and the owner brought in blacks from Georgia to pick peaches.

One day, three of the pickers from the other orchard came over and wanted to know who was the guy who had picked 176 bushels of peaches in a day. Clayton pointed to Gus. He said it was immaterial (he knew he had picked that many because that is what he had been paid for) but the three men were mad and told Gus that he was dumb to pick more than the professional pickers! The next day, the headlines in the newspaper said, "Problems in the peach orchards." A few years later, Walter Hiltz came through Colorado and picked up some fruit. The owner of the orchard saw that the Hiltz were from St. Francis and, remembering Gus, sent back a bushel of pears just for him.

Mrs. Zwegygart was the oldest child of five. She was responsible for them, making sure they got home from school even in the middle of dust storms. She said her mother would let her rest for a few minutes, then tell her to go out and get the hens that had gone to roost since it was so dark. They were sitting everywhere in the yard, Mrs. Zwegygart said. I would pick them up and put them in the chicken house.

At the age of 18, she went to work for Pastor and Mrs. Fredrick Jungck. Both were bed ridden and they had two small boys. Martha not only did all of the house work and taking care of the couple and their children but, on her slack days, did the washing and ironing for another pastor and his wife in Bird City. When Mrs. Jungck's mother came to help, she said, "Girl, I don't know how you did all of this work!" Mrs. Zwegygart said she had been taught to work and knew how to work hard! The pastor died and the rest of the family moved on.

Now, 21 years old, she went to work for Mr. and Mrs. Howard Sawhill. She had been paid \$3 to work for the Jungck but, now, she was making \$5 an hour. When she and Gus were married, Mrs. Sawhill held a shower for her.

When the war ended, the Zwegygarths sold their place

south of St. Francis and bought a farm north of St. Francis. The land had been intended for Oscar, Gus' brother, but he had been killed in the war.

Their daughter, Ruth, was born at the Jaqua farm house. When son, Glenn, was born, there was Dr. Peck's St. Francis Hospital. Mrs. Zwegygart said the hospital was full so, not having a place for Glenn, had put him in a dresser drawer after he was born.

They moved into St. Francis in 1982 after spending 26 years on the farm north of town. In 2007, they moved to the Good Samaritan Village apartments. Now, Martha said, we are all on one floor (no basement). They have four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Martha noted that they lost a grandchild many years ago.

When asked what their advice to young people might be, Mrs. Zwegygart said to work, be honest and kind. Mr. Zwegygart advised to be patient. "Sometimes it doesn't always go like you expected and you have to work it out."

He also had another observation about the new President Obama and the bailout. He said, "I heard my dad said, 'you can borrow yourself out of debt.' I think about that a lot these days when I listen to the news."

MILLIKEN

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Their daughter, Kelly, was 6 months old when they moved to St. Francis. Ruth taught second grade and Jim established his law office. They added two more children, Kari and JW.

While Jim has practiced law, Ruth has worked in various occupations including helping Jim, substituting at the schools, ran Riverside Recreation and KM Clothier dress shop. Today, she baby sits grandchildren, Molly and Joel. She also has a third grandchild, Jacki, who lives in Ohio.

When asked what advice she would give to young couples, Mrs. Milliken said, "There are always challenges around the corner." She added that a woman had once given her a cookie jar and told her to always keep cookies in the jar and she would have less troubles. "I think about that every time I fill the jar!"

75th

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flood waters wiped out farms and crops. They lived about a mile from the river but before the waters receded, it reached the steps of the house. The Coxes stayed in the house throughout the flood.

Their first son, Arvie, was born in the little house with Dr. J.H.A. Peck attending the birth. Arrie was born in the St. Francis Hospital, the old two-story building which once stood on Scott and Spencer streets. Dr. T.J. Walz made the delivery. To-

day, they have three grandchildren (Mike, Shawn and Connie) and eight great-grandchildren.

Through the years, they saw many changes including farming with horses to driving big tractors. Arrie remembered his grandfather making the purchase of a used 1929 John Deere tractor. Mrs. Cox washed clothes on a washboard in a wash tub filled with water. Later, it was a big day when she got a washing machine with a hand-operated wringer. She also made all of the

boys' shirts. Arrie said they did get to pick out the material.

The cows were milked and the cream was separated in a separator. They sold some of the cream in Wray.

They moved to St. Francis to their home on Fourth and Adams streets in 2003. They are lifelong Seventh-Day Adventists and still hold to that faith today.

A card shower is being held in their honor. People are urged to send well wishes to them at 820 S. Denison, St. Francis, KS 67756.

Coming Soon:



This section will feature the Conservation Award Winner in Cheyenne County.

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