



**BOB AND NEOMA TACHA** posed for a picture as they cut the cake on their wedding day, Sept. 24, 1946, at the Jennings Methodist Church. They operated Tacha Barber and Beauty Shops in Jennings until their retirement and now spend many hours working at the Jennings Czech Museum, part of which is the church in which they were married.

# Neighbors saved sugar rations for wedding cake 61 years ago

By **MARY LOU OLSON**

When Bob and Neoma Tacha were married on Sept. 14, 1946, their neighbors had to save sugar ration coupons so they could have a wedding cake.

The couple, who has lived at Jennings most of their married life, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in 2006.

Mrs. Tacha, the former Neoma Kusy, said that her introduction to western Kansas was in May of 1939 when her mother, Marye (Strnad) Kusy and J.S. Flaska were married in June 1939. The kids moved with their mother from Belleville after the wedding.

"Without a doubt, my brother Willis and I thought this was the end of the earth," she recalled of those Dust Bowl days. "The color green was not to be seen, the dust drifts were over the fences and the only part of the horse-drawn machinery that could be seen was the top of the wheels and the iron seats."

"We had lived only 150 miles east of Jennings and we had dry weather, but nothing like this area."

"After moving to a farm northeast of Jennings with my folks, I met Darleen Brock. Her parents ran the Brock Grocery Store. We hit it off immediately and she became my best friend. I soon learned that most of the kids around here were her cousins."

"It was in 1939 when I accompanied my step-father to their grocery store that Darleen introduced me to my future husband, Harold "Bob" Tacha. I loved to dance and he was a very good, smooth dancer. We had several dates, but he was soon off to Strickler Business College in Topeka, then moved to Denver to work for Fitzsimons General Hospital as a PX clerk."

"Whenever he came home, we would usually go to the dance at the

Old Bohemian Hall. My step-father, J.S. Flaska, managed the dances and my mother ran the kitchen in the basement."

When World War II came along, Bob was inducted into the Army in 1942 and served until his discharge in 1946. Mrs. Tacha said they kept in touch by writing letters.

"After my graduation from Jennings High School in 1943," she said, "I went to Denver, where Darleen (Brock) and I went to work in the Cubusco defense plant. After the war was over, we both went to the Charles of Denver Beauty College. After graduation, I returned to Kansas as it seems as though there was a certain young veteran back in Jennings I wanted to see."

The couple resumed their courtship and she got a job working for Zella Driskell at her beauty shop in Oberlin.

"After spending a week with my folks," she said, "Bob was taking me back to Oberlin and we were headed west on U.S. Highway 36. Bob looked at me and said, 'Are you ever going to marry me?' and when I said, 'Yes,' I thought he was going to wreck the car."

"We were engaged in March 1946 and were married at the Jennings Methodist Church on Sept. 14, 1946. In the wedding party were Darleen Brock (Gager), Lois Schmoker, Maxine Mrstik (Sauvage), Gerald Tacha, Willis Kusy, Paul Tacha and Karen Mizell (Mizell) and Colleen Mizell (Ellis)."

During World War II, many things were rationed, including sugar, but with the donation of several sugar stamps from friends and relatives, they had enough sugar for their wedding cake, which was made by Fannie Carper, Mrs. Tacha said.

A week after the wedding, the newlyweds were off to Denver, where he enrolled in barber college.

After he graduated, they returned to Jennings and opened the Tacha Barber and Beauty Shops at 108 S. Kansas Ave. in 1947. They had living quarters in the east part of the building and it was there that they reared their two sons, Roger, born May 26, 1952, and Royal, who arrived Feb. 22, 1956.

"We lived in our cozy quarters until 1964, when we purchased the home at 221 S. Kansas Ave. where we still live," Mrs. Tacha said. "The family had so many good times living in the shop. We couldn't afford a car, but we enjoyed many hours of cards, fishing, hunting, and walking."

"Our place seemed to be the gathering place, whether it was kids or relatives, but we have no regrets."

Mrs. Tacha retired from the beauty shop in 1992 after 46 years and her husband retired from the barber shop in 1994 after working 47 years. He also served as the Jennings postmaster from 1968 to 1998, city clerk for 35 years and a volunteer fireman for 11 years.

Mrs. Tacha was on the Jennings School Board from 1971 to 1981, and a fire fighter from 1979 to 1992. She retired at the age of 67.

"Bob and I have always done so many things together," she said, "our professional careers, community involvement, including the Jennings Czech Memorial Museum, which really keeps us busy. The public support is great for the museum and there are absolutely no boundaries as to what can be classed as collectible and shared."

Their son Roger is a range manager for the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service in Oakley and his wife Peggy teaches fifth grade there. They have a son, Dustin, who is getting a master's degree in biology from Fort Hays State University.



**THE TACHA FAMILY** includes, from left, Bob, their sons, Royal and Roger, and Neoma. at their home during Christmas when the boys were young.

Royal is postmaster in Hoxie and his wife Gayle is secretary at the Hoxie Elementary Grade School. They have a daughter Ashley, who is married to Jeff Brown. She is a beautician in Park and her husband helps his father farm and also drives a truck. She has two step-children, Hanna and Eathan, and a daughter, Brynna. Their son Garrett is a senior at Hoxie High School.

"We are blessed to have all of the families so close to us so we get to share the good times, as well as their concerns," Mrs. Tacha said.

His wife was born on a farm near Council Grove on Jan. 22, 1925. Her parents were Joseph and Marye (Strnad) Kusy. She attended schools in rural Narka, Cuba and Belleville and graduated from Jennings High School in 1943.

Even after 60 years, she said, she was able to wear her wedding dress to an anniversary party put on by their family.

"It even fit," she said with a smile.

"Bob and I remind ourselves many times how fortunate we are to still have each other," Mrs. Tacha said, "have good health, family and friends and can still fend for ourselves. The good Lord has been very good to us."