

Man to celebrate 100th birthday

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Looking back over the past 100 years, retired farmer and rancher Earl Brown, who will celebrate his centennial birthday on Sunday, said he has many great memories, but maybe the best is when he rode with the Decatur Saddle Club for the inaugural parade of President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1953.

His family will honor him with an open house from 2 to 4 p.m. on Sunday at the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center, and the public is invited.

"It is only a matter of hours until this community's contribution to the huge presidential inaugural parade in Washington, D.C., will be en route to the nation's capital," *The Oberlin Herald* reported in January of that year. "It is an historic event for Decatur County, for never before has the county been officially represented in any part of a president inauguration."

"The Decatur Saddle Club drill team, invited to participate in the parade on Pennsylvania Avenue preceding the inauguration of President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower, will leave Oberlin Friday morning in a bus chartered with the Bickel bus line. In Kansas City, the drill team members will board the special train for Washington. They will arrive Sunday morning and in the afternoon will take part in the reception arranged for President Eisenhower by Kansas friends."

"Trucks carrying the saddle horses will leave from here for Kansas City and then be transferred into a special stock car attached to the same train the riders will be aboard."

The midwinter trip was not without its discomforts, Mr. Brown recalled.

"Our son, Steve, was just 4 years old at the time and it was 10 below zero when my wife, Zola, brought me to town to join the others on the bus," he recalled. "I sat in the back and got a terrible cold, and even though our local medical doctor, C.M. Nelson, was with us, it didn't help much. I was too sick to even help unload the horses, but I did ride in the parade."

Mr. Brown said he's lived all of his life in Decatur County. He and his twin sister, Mearl, were born Dec. 18, 1911, in a sod house on the family farm in Sappa Township to C.C. and Anna (Woolley) Brown. They had four sisters, Lena (Simpson), Verna (Quinlisk), Mary (Alderson) and Mary (Smith), and four brothers, Ralph, Harold, Harry and Floyd. He said he walked a mile to attend Plainview School or sometimes rode a horse. Other classmates of the twins were Kermit and Vada Hackney and Lucille Ginther.

Mr. Brown said he helped milk cows before and after school and his family raised cattle, hogs and some sheep.

He was active in sports at Decatur Community High School, won the state championship a 110 pounds in wrestling his freshman year and also participated in football and track. Others on the wrestling team were Ira Barnhart, Bob Paddock, Merle Bishop, Lester Chilson, Lemoin Landau, Leonard Borthwick, Alva Van Vleet, Shelby Miller, Dale Bates and Russel Sedustine.

"We had an old Buick which I drove to town during the week," he said. "We all batched (in rented rooms). We brought our own food from home and did our own cooking. We went home on weekends and returned on Sunday night."

Mr. Brown was named an honor student during commencement exercises May 13, 1931, at the city school auditorium. Valedictorian was Lois Mines and Junior Howard was salutatorian. Speaker was F.D. Farrell, president of Kansas State Agricultural College at Manhattan. In the 1931 "Decatur Dictator," Mr. Brown was referred to as "Little—but Mighty!"

After graduating, he worked at his father's grain elevator in Oberlin. At that time, he said that much of the wheat came to town in gunny sacks. After brothers Harry and Floyd left to serve in World War II, he moved



DECATUR SADDLE CLUB members (above) who rode in President Dwight D. Eisenhower's inaugural parade in Washington in January 1953 included (front row, from left): Pete Jones, Earl Brown, Chet Youngs, Curtis Young, Emery Chance, Forrest Carter, Glenn Casford and Elmer Carlson; (second row) Albert McVay, Elsie Young, U.S. Sen. Andrew Schoepel, Esther

Schmahl, Gov. Ed Arn, Mrs. Wint Smith, U.S. Rep. Wint Smith; and (third row), Herman Schmahl, OR. (Bud) Kelley, Opal Youngs, Frank Lake, Gerald Wiley, Carroll B. Miller, Dr. C.M. Nelson, Ernest Nelson, Wilda Area, Floyd Gilbert, Ralph Waldo and Scott Brown. Not pictured was Maurice Foley.



Earl Brown, 1931

back to the family farm, southwest of Oberlin.

"Though times were hard and most of the work was done in the early years with horses," he said, "when it comes to farming, I enjoyed everything about it."

Another special memory included the many years he played on the Swede softball team in Rawlins County.

"The team, made up mostly of area farmers, just quit early in those days and headed for the ball diamond, located near the farm of Freda and Fredolph Carlson in Rawlins County," he said. "Ernie Nelson brought his John Deere tractor to run the generator for the lights before electricity came to the area in 1948."

"I always played short stop or center. We played the Lund, Atwood, Oberlin and Ludell teams and even went as far as Scott City for games."

His love life probably had its real beginning when he was 27, he recalled.

"I was approached by a young woman, Zola Maggard, in the Sweet Shoppe in Oberlin. She told me that someone had put ice down her back and she asked me to help her get it out. However, I decided she really just wanted for us to meet."

She was also a twin, and her sister, Ola, later married Dale Yauk. He said that he and Zola hit it off immediately. She was working in the Farmers National Bank in Oberlin and after eight years of dating, they were married in 1945 and moved to his farm in Bassettville Township.

They had two sons. Steve has taken over the family cattle and farming operation and lives nearby with his wife Barbara in Bassettville Township. Ward is a veterinarian in Kansas City. He and his wife, Sarah, have three daughters, Elizabeth, Katherine and Jennifer. Both sons are Decatur Community High School graduates.

Mr. Brown could always be found in area sale barns over the years, where he bought cattle to feed out on his farm. Even after he moved to the nursing home in 2006, he continued going to the sales as long as he was able.



EARL AND ZOLA BROWN (above) with their oldest son Steve at the farm home of her parents, left) Zola Brown and her twin sister, Ola Yauk, with Roy and Dollie Maggard, after a Sunday dinner.

Celebrating their birthdays together were (below, from left) Zola Brown and her twin sister, Ola Yauk, with their husbands, Earl Brown and Dale Yauk.

