

Hans W. Neuenschwander

Jan. 17, 1927 - June 16, 2010

Hans W. Neuenschwander, age 83, went to be with the Lord on Wednesday, June 16, 2010, at HospiceCare, Inc., following a six-year battle with Alzheimer's.

Hans was born on Jan. 17, 1927, in Thun, Switzerland, the second of three sons to Hermine (Burkhardt) and Eduard Neuenschwander. Hans was raised on the family farm and lived in Switzerland, until emigrating to the United States in November 1949 at the age of 22 with two pieces of luggage and \$100 in his pocket.

In March 1954, Hans went to his homeland of Switzerland for a three-month visit with his parents, brother, Peter and his many friends. It was during that visit that Hans' mother gave him the gift of a Bernina sewing machine, which was to be given to who would become his future wife, Irene Elmer. Upon his return to the United States, and the small Green County, Town of New Glarus, Hans became fascinated with the mechanics and inner workings of this sewing machine, and learned more about it by taking apart various mechanisms and putting them back together again. His proficiency became such that he was able to completely dismantle and reassemble the machine without any special gauges of any kind. Word of that feat spread back to Switzerland and to the president of Bernina, Fritz Gegauf, who responded that what Hans did could not possibly be done without special factory gauges and tools. Within a few years, Hans traveled again to Switzerland, met with Fritz Gegauf at the factory and showed him his abilities. Before that visit was through, Mr. Gegauf bestowed the ultimate honor to Hans by telling him he was the most amazing mechanic he had ever seen.

In the New Glarus and surrounding area, Hans began selling Bernina sewing machines door-to-door to residents and farmers. This was to be the start of what became Hans' Sewing Center in Madison. Hans married Irene Elmer in 1957, and later that year Irene gave birth to their son, David. Hans and Irene celebrated 50 years of marriage in 2007, just a few months before Irene passed away. For many years during the 50's and 60's, Hans was a lead yodeler along with his good friend, Robert Schneider in the New Glarus Yodel Club. Hans took immense pride in his Swiss heritage, his Swiss friends, and all of that love for Switzerland and everything Swiss was conveyed through his beautiful singing and yodeling.

In the late 60's, Hans took up flying lessons, and for many years enjoyed his small Piper "Colt" airplane. Some years later, he was introduced to ultralight aircraft and was thrilled to buy and fly one for some 30 years. Winter, Spring, Summer or Fall, whenever the weather conditions were right and he was able to break away from the business, he would rush down to the airport and soar over the countryside, enjoying the bird-like freedom of the open-air flights, and took immense pleasure in watching deer, wild turkey, birds, and seeing all of the beautiful farms along the way. Hans was a simple man, and someone who cared very deeply for his family and friends. In the heyday of his business growth, with 18-hour workdays no stranger to him, he made sure that business stopped completely on Sundays, so that he could devote himself to give his thanks to the Lord at the morning church service, then either take his family to Noll's Cafe on East Washington Avenue, or stow a grill and some charcoal in the car to head over to Tenney Park with Irene and David, often accompanied by his parents or other friends. Sunday was a very special day for Hans and for those who spent time with him.

Hans is survived by his son, David (Lucy) Neuenschwander; beloved grandchildren, Jessica and Eric Neuenschwander; cherished brothers, Edward (Verona) Neuenschwander and Peter (Agnes) Neuenschwander; many treasured nieces and nephews; and respected brothers and sisters-in-law, Sylvan (Dorothy) Elmer, Doris Aebly, Mabel (Duane) Shippy, Charlotte Tresner, and Carolyn (Dave) Pederson.

Hans was preceded in death by his wife, Irene; his parents, Eduard and Hermine Neuenschwander, and his very special uncles, Walter, Robert, and Gottlieb Burkhardt.

The family expresses its sincere appreciation to Dr. Trent Thompson at Dean Waunakee, as well as the staffs of Waunakee Manor, St. Mary's Hospital, Stoughton Hospital, Pinewood Living of Windsor, Trinity Senior Care, and HospiceCare of Fitchburg. Special thanks to his daughter-in-law, Lucy, who tirelessly took care of the needs of Hans and Irene during their illnesses. You truly are a special gift from God to this family. Last, and far from least is the family's great love and appreciation to Hans' very special friend, Norbert Meier. Norbert, you were there for Dad reliably and endlessly throughout Dad's illness. You truly and completely represent the ultimate definition of what a friend is and should be - thank you so very much.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, June 26, 2010, at 11 a.m. at BETHANY EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH, 301 Riverside Drive in Madison. A visitation will be held from 10 a.m. until the time of service. The Zentner-Beal Funeral Home of New Glarus is serving the family. A private burial will follow at a later date. Memorials may be made to HospiceCare, Inc.

I love you, Dad, and will miss you greatly until we meet again. Thank you so much for being the finest father a son could ever have hoped for. David

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