



## Darwin Rasmussen

October 14, 2011

Darwin Lee Rasmussen, the son of Carl and Hazel Rasmussen, was born on July 23, 1930 in Emmetsburg, Iowa and passed away at age 81 in Spirit Lake, Iowa on October 15, 2011. He died peacefully in his sleep from the after effects of a heart attack, following two months in the hospital. While being in the hospital was difficult, it allowed him to spend time with his family and friends, help his family arrange for life after he was gone and say his farewells.

Darwin was a farmer, an occupation that was a major part of his identity, during his entire life. His father was a farmer and, in his youth, Darwin helped on the farm. He also raised and sold chickens and ducks. He used the money for Christmas presents for his family and to buy Queen, a part-Arabian mare with a wild streak. He rode her using a blanket equipped with a cinch and stirrups, because he could not afford a saddle. After he taught Queen to jump, she escaped from the farm so often by jumping over the fence that he had to sell her. Darwin soon stepped up to even faster modes of transportation. He saved money to buy a car, but before he could purchase one, he bought a \$1 ticket at a raffle and won a new 1947 Ford. He then bought a used Indian motorcycle with his savings.

Darwin began school in a one-room schoolhouse near Graettinger, Iowa and graduated from Graettinger High School in 1949. Friends were the best part of

school for Darwin, as he was not interested in studying. With his car, motorcycle and wavy hair, he was very popular with the high school girls. A friend bet him that he could not get a date with Gwen McWilliams. Darwin won that bet and they dated from then until they were married. Gwen's mother provided pies and caramel nut rolls after their dates to make sure Darwin and Gwen stayed out of trouble. After graduating, Darwin started farming in the Graettinger area. He continued to farm for as long as he was physically able, except for serving in the Army from 1952 to 1954, including one year in Germany.

Darwin's marriage to Gwen in 1951 was the best decision he ever made. They were true partners, pitching in to help and encourage each other whether they were raising children, farming or supporting Gwen's school teaching. The depth of their love was evident to anyone who met them and continued to the end. Their marriage produced four children, who have always been close to Darwin and Gwen, as well as to each other. Darwin was a wonderful, loving father. He showed his love in everything he did with and for his children, including moving from the farm to the south shore of Big Spirit Lake, so his children could go to a better school and to make Gwen happy because she loved the lake. He lived at the lake from 1963 to 2011, making frequent trips to the farm. He especially enjoyed taking his children to the farm to walk beans and pick rocks. He also nurtured their enjoyment of fast cars, motorcycles, snowmobiles and boats. Besides his family and farming, Darwin's interests included driving and polishing muscle cars, attending stock car races, riding motorcycles, snowmobiling, water skiing and boating.

After retiring and renting out the farm, Darwin continued to closely follow all aspects of farming. He owned an antique John Deere 4020 tractor to stay close to his roots, which he kept at the lake until finally selling it in 2011. In his later years, he could hardly wait for the grass to grow so that he could mow the lawn at the lake on his riding mower, as this was the closest he could get

to farming. Darwin was also known for his wry sense of humor. He always had a comeback and enjoyed debating the issues of the day. Darwin even kept his sense of humor in the hospital during his last two months, which made him a favorite of the nurses.

Darwin is survived by his wife of 60 years, Gwen; four children and their families: Diane Rasmussen of Spirit Lake; Mark Rasmussen and his wife, Linda, of Santa Barbara, California and their children, Willem and Sophia; Kirt Rasmussen and his wife, Jody Cockrell, of Houston, Texas; and Alan Rasmussen and Sue Shupe of Spirit Lake and her daughter, Lyndi; sister: Dorothy Luke and her husband, Delbert, of Ringsted, Iowa and their children, Janet and Daryl; brother: Duane Rasmussen of Royal, Iowa and his children, Brian and Brad; and cousins: Leroy Rasmussen and his wife, Betty, of Spirit Lake and their son, Clark; and Shirley Rasmussen of Spirit Lake and her son, Dane. We cherish our memories of Darwin and the many ways he contributed to our lives.