



Frederick Reed Dowden

October 4, 1931 - December 22, 2020

Frederick Reed Dowden, 89, of Spirit Lake, died at home on December 22, 2020. Born to Frederick Rufus and Bessie Elva (Reed) Dowden on October 4, 1931, at the family home on 16th Street, Fred spent nearly all his life in Spirit Lake, a place he loved dearly. Fred (aka Freddie, Snug, Unc) graduated from Spirit Lake High School with the Class of 1950. For three years he attended the University of South Dakota before being drafted into the Army. After his discharge in 1955, he went on to earn a degree in business and commerce from the University of Iowa.

Fred had earlier – in the summer of 1952 – fallen in love with Diane Corl. A blonde beauty from Atlantic, Iowa, Diane worked as a carhop at Red's, a drive-in at Arnolds Park. The two married in 1953, and three years later their daughter Robin was born. When Fred completed his degree at the University of Iowa, his father (Fred Sr.), who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness, asked his namesake to return to Spirit Lake. Fred obliged, eventually purchasing the real estate and insurance agency that his father had founded in 1918.

A successful entrepreneur, Fred was associated with a long list of business dealings in the Lakes Region. He helped found Lakes Development in the 1960s, which developed property on US-71 (extending from today's Indian Motorcycles to Cenla Campground) as well as properties in Milford. He was a leader of Spirit Lake Industries, the one-time owner of Brooks Golf Course and the old Holiday Inn, Arnolds Park Amusement Park (which Fred operated

from 1969-1987), Style Craft Furniture, Great Lakes Mall, Center Lake Village, hotels in Des Moines and Illinois, and more. Locally, he built the apartment house north of the Spirit Lake Post Office, and the former Dowden-Hinn Realtors office building on Highway 71 (if the building is brick and has white, colonial-style trim, Fred likely had a hand in it). He was hard-working, civic-minded and enjoyed seeing others capitalize on opportunities. He loathed government debt, and his aim was to have the Dickinson County Taxpayer's Association flourish. In a 1989 Okoboji Magazine profile, he spoke of ridding local communities of dividedness: "I'd like to see people of all the communities work together. The goal is the same for all of us. We want to have the best retailers, the best service, etc. When my neighbor prospers, I prosper."

An avid hunter and fisherman, Fred cultivated a passion for the outdoors from early on, encouraged in particular by his sister Nell's husband, Lawrence. Fred spent summers working at the couple's fishing resort at Lake Cochrane, South Dakota. As a junior in high school he wrote to Nell, "I don't know what I'm going to do. I have such a hard time waiting for everything. Every time I look at my fly rod, I want to go fishing so bad it's just pathetic."

Fred considered an Iowa cornfield the prettiest site ever, but it was the wheat fields and prairies of Saskatchewan that called to him each autumn. As a 16-year-old, he had gone with his father to Canada to help with the harvest on land Fred Sr. had acquired in the 1930s from a traveling salesman in need of a new car. Lake Lenore in Saskatchewan would become Fred's second home. He and his friends, including his childhood hunting buddy Dave Dean, would travel there every October from 1956 to 2019, stalking birds in the fields and marshes.

An only son born to older parents, Fred had three sisters, and the youngest of those was 17 years older than Fred. Fred relished the role of youthful family patriarch to a clan of mostly women. He was a loving brother, caring uncle, devoted husband and father.

The last day of Fred's life was a good one. He took his customary drive around Big Spirit Lake – his daily commune with god and nature – and

stopped at Lakeview Cemetery to say good morning to Diane, who had passed away years earlier. Back home he welcomed the arrivals of Donna Johnson, his partner of the last decade, and later that day, his daughter Robin. The three visited, discussed their Christmas plans, steered clear of politics, and enjoyed dinner together. Fred's heart failed an hour later as he was getting into bed. A master card player, he could not have played a better hand. It was a remarkable ending to an exceptionally well-lived life.

Fred is survived by his daughter Robin Dowden of Corning, NY; his partner Donna Johnson of Lakeville, MN; Donnie Johnson of Spirit Lake, who was like a son to Fred; and four nieces and a nephew. His wife and three sisters predeceased him.

A celebration of life for Fred Dowden of Spirit Lake, will be held from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, August 1, 2021, at the Mini-Wakan State Park Lodge at the north shore of Big Spirit Lake. A time to share your favorite memories of Fred and a meal will be provided. A private family burial will be held in the Lake View Cemetery in Spirit Lake.

On August 6-7, there will be an estate sale at Fred's house on Indian Hills Golf Course (15396 215th Ave Place), the proceeds of which will go to needy children in Oaxaca, Mexico through the Street Children Grassroots Program founded by Cliff Hinderman.

Cemetery Details

Lake View Cemetery

2684 18th Street
Spirit Lake, IA

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

AUG 1. 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

Mini-Wakan State Park
24490 100th Street
Spirit Lake, IA 51360

Tribute Wall



“ *Robinson Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*



Robinson Funeral Home - July 30, 2021 at 04:32 PM

KK

“ *Fred was a good man, many will miss him. RIP Mr. Dowden, Prayers to his family and friends.*



Kevin T. Kuehl - July 30, 2021 at 05:04 PM



“ *Pink Tribute Spray was purchased for the family of Frederick Reed Dowden.*



July 26, 2021 at 04:58 PM

PK

“ *Robin, your dad was a great businessman. I admired him and always enjoyed when my dad and he had their business discussions. Sorry for your loss from the Kappes family*

pat kappes - January 20, 2021 at 12:03 PM

SS

“ *Sally Scheib lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*



Sally Scheib - January 05, 2021 at 08:20 AM

BP

“ *Thanks for the memories Fred .take care Robin.*

bruce pflueger - January 01, 2021 at 04:00 PM

PB

“ *Paul Bakke lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*



Paul bakke - January 01, 2021 at 06:33 AM

MS

“ *Marsha Smeltzer lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*



Marsha Smeltzer - December 30, 2020 at 08:03 PM

KM

“ *Fred was always so pleasant to work with on real estate matters. So sorry for your loss.*

Kathy McNeill - December 29, 2020 at 05:14 PM

DM

“ Robin, You have are deepest Sympathies. Willia and I are Heart broken with loss...
Too many good times in the last 45 years together with Fred and Diane...
See in the Spring.....
Willia and Duane

Duane Mueske - December 29, 2020 at 03:51 PM

TG

“ Twyla Garnmeister lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden



Twyla Garnmeister - December 29, 2020 at 01:21 PM

SD

“ Robin, So sorry to hear of the loss of your Dad (Big Bill Christensen). I have known Fred my entire life. He was a friend of my Dad. I ran into Fred at the post office often and we would also chat. He was a very kind man and will be missed by all. Hugs and prayers to you and your family.

Sally DeLoss - December 29, 2020 at 09:17 AM

DB

“ My sympathy to your family.

Dayle Brooks



Dayle Brooks - December 29, 2020 at 08:24 AM

CL

“ *Craig LeBlanc lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*



Craig LeBlanc - December 28, 2020 at 02:14 PM

JL

“ *Jill R Larson sent a virtual gift in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*

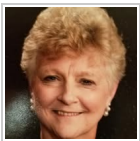


Jill R Larson - December 28, 2020 at 10:36 AM

JL

I met Fred back in 1979 when I moved here. I believe he and my grandmother Sylvia Reed Anderson are cousins. I'll always remember Fred with a smile.

Jill R Larson - December 28, 2020 at 10:39 AM



“ *Fred was such a sweetheart...everyone knew him and loved him! ...a pillar of the community. So sad to know he has passed and we won't be seeing him around. Happy to know though that he is in the arms of the Savior and with Diane again! Rest in peace and enjoy the Glory of Heaven, Fred!*

Charlene Radcliffe - December 27, 2020 at 10:09 PM

CF

“ Sending our condolences, a long time of wonderful memories with the Dowden family.

Cohrs Family - December 27, 2020 at 05:22 PM

SH

“ Susan Howe lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden



Susan Howe - December 27, 2020 at 11:05 AM

SH

Fred was a very dear friend of my parents, Keith and Elveda Ross. Keith has been gone for many years and perhaps they are sharing some jokes together again. Elveda sends her sympathy. She recalls sitting near Fred in church every Sunday.

Susan Howe - December 27, 2020 at 11:07 AM

RI

“ Robert Irvine lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden



Robert Irvine - December 26, 2020 at 08:40 PM

FK

“ Fred Kaminska lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden



Fred Kaminska - December 26, 2020 at 08:29 PM

AK

“ Alice Kabele



Alice Kabele - December 26, 2020 at 02:23 PM

JN

“ Robin, I'm very sorry for the loss of your dad, he was a really great guy and a positive force for the Lakes area. I have a lot of great memories growing up next door to your family. My sympathies and prayers to you.



Jeff Newell - December 26, 2020 at 12:14 AM

MS

“ Marge Schneidawind lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden



Marge Schneidawind - December 25, 2020 at 03:25 PM

KH

“ *Kae Hoppe lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*



Kae Hoppe - December 25, 2020 at 09:33 AM

CW

“ *Connie & Bill Wymer lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*



Connie & Bill Wymer - December 25, 2020 at 09:22 AM

JS

“ *John Smith lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*



John Smith - December 25, 2020 at 06:53 AM

LH

“ Dear Dowden Family-I met Fred when I worked at Hilltop Care Center. His love and devotion to Diane touched my heart. He told me what she did in her earlier years, how organized she was, that she played tennis and was a wonderful wife and mother. They are together again in heaven. It must have been a joyful reunion. You have my sincere sympathies.



Laura Hanna - December 24, 2020 at 02:51 PM

LH

“ Robin,

The Dowdens were more than friends, they were family. Fred & Diane provided a safety net for me and I always felt comforted knowing they were in my corner. Many, many good memories. They are very much missed. Love to you.....

Laurie Russell Huseman - December 24, 2020 at 02:24 PM

SH

“ I too like many others have known Freddie all my life, he was the last of the "good ole boys" in our community. May he rest in peace



sandy haht - December 24, 2020 at 02:06 PM

BS

“ Our sympathy to the Dowden family and friends. Fred was a pillar of the community. May he rest in peace. Bob and Kate Shaw



Bob and Kate Shaw - December 24, 2020 at 11:53 AM

PJ

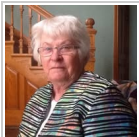
“ When I moved my family to Spirit Lake in 1965 to join Berkley one of the first people to greet us was Fred Dowden. We needed a home. Fred went out of his way to help us. He found a perfect home for us and personally negotiated the purchase and backed us at a time when our family funds were very limited. Over the years that followed his continued friendship and help to me and my family never wavered. He was a Gift from God that profoundly affected our lives.

Paul C Johnson - December 24, 2020 at 09:00 AM

HR

“ My sympathies to the family! He will be missed! He was always quick to remind me that we were the same age! Blessings 🙏🙏❤️

Hazel Read - December 24, 2020 at 08:56 AM



“ Marlene Schmidt lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden



Marlene Schmidt - December 23, 2020 at 11:14 PM

LJ

“ *Larry MaryAnn Jansen lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*



larry MaryAnn Jansen - December 23, 2020 at 08:29 PM

JB

“ *Jon & Deb Brekke lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*



Jon & Deb Brekke - December 23, 2020 at 07:42 PM

MG

“ *Robin,
Tom and I enjoyed our friendship with your parents. They were always kind to us and our boys. May you be comforted and find peace in the days ahead. We share in your loss.
Tom and Mary Gengerke*



Mary Gengerke - December 23, 2020 at 06:21 PM

DC

“ *Robin
We have so many fond memories of the times with your dad and mom while growing up in Spirit Lake. Your dad was Martha's first employer while living in Spirit Lake before we were married. Your dad was always fun to be around and will be greatly missed.*

David and Martha Chozen - December 23, 2020 at 05:59 PM

MC

Loved Fred and (Diane). Great friend, greater promoter of the lakes and all here.

mike chozen - January 03, 2021 at 09:01 PM

BA

“ *Ann and family, my deepest sympathy to you all. Uncle Fred will be missed, and the pew at church will not be the same without him.*

Beverly Atwell - December 23, 2020 at 04:55 PM

KH

“ *Kae Hopppe lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*



Kae Hopppe - December 23, 2020 at 04:49 PM

RL

“ *Roger & Karen Lahm lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*



Roger & Karen Lahm - December 23, 2020 at 03:47 PM

 Mary Vander Woude

“ *Mary Vander Woude lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*



Mary Vander Woude - December 23, 2020 at 02:46 PM



“ *Norm Meinking lit a candle in memory of Frederick Reed Dowden*



Norm Meinking - December 23, 2020 at 02:04 PM

LG

Robin, I will always have several fond memories of time spent with Fred. He had a keen sense of wit and entertaining humor. I went on a few fishing trips with him to Costa Rica and Lake Michigan and he always out fished me even though that was quite easy to do. Many of us will miss him.

Loren Gustafson

Loren Gustafson - December 24, 2020 at 08:49 AM

PH

On Sunday evening December 20th I called Fred on his cell phone, trying to recall a name from the past. He couldn't remember it either, which made me feel better. Had a nice long visit having know idea it would be our last. When I built KUOO he told me it would never work. A year later we were in imbibing at Tweeters and he looked at me and said...."It worked". Fred was a great guy because he married a great gal, Diane.. We had a lot of similarities and great times....Will miss him a lot, but think of him a lot also.

Paul Hedberg

Paul Hedberg - December 31, 2020 at 03:03 PM