



## Henry Schmiess

September 5, 2017

Henry Schmiess

December 10, 1919 – September 5, 2017

Henry Schmiess of Alsen, N.D. and New Brighton, Minn., entered his eternal rest on September 5, 2017, in his home in Blaine, Minn. A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, September 9, at GracePoint Church, 2351 Rice Creek Road, New Brighton, Minn. A committal service will follow in North Dakota next spring. In lieu of flowers, gifts are requested to either GracePoint Church of New Brighton, Minn., or to Emmanuel Evangelical Church of Langdon, N.D.

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Henry was born on December 10, 1919, in the family farmhouse in Cavalier County, North Dakota, near the small town of Alsen. His parents, David and Julia Schmiess, had immigrated in 1912 from the German colony of Dreispitz in Russia's Volga region. Henry was the fourth child in the family, after older siblings Clara, Victor and Lydia. His siblings nicknamed him "Die Guldigen," or "The Golden One," a gentle ribbing for what they perceived to be his favored status.

But Henry was introduced very early in his boyhood to the constant rigors and

work of life on the family farm—two quarter-sections of land where spring wheat, barley, oats and hay were raised, and a pasture and barnyard full of cattle, horses, pigs, and farm fowl. His mother always planted two large vegetable gardens, where Henry grew up weeding, plucking and digging the produce so vital to a winter's food supply.

By age 10, he took the reins and learned to drive a team of horses in the fields, either walking behind, or enduring the hard metal seats of a small harrow, cultivator, or one-bottom plow. During harvest, his earliest duty was driving a loaded horse-drawn bundle wagon between the fields and a steam-powered threshing machine, where adults pitched the grain into the smoke-belching equipment.

His grade 1-8 education was at Gordon Township #2 country school, graduating high school in 1941 from Alsen Public. He began further education for a business degree at Wahpeton College. But World War II intervened, his brother was inducted into the Army, and Henry had to leave college to help his father farm. When Victor was killed in action at Normandy, the family farm became Henry's duty and life's career.

His life in farming would span 78 years, evolving from the horse-drawn plow to GPS-guided four-wheel-drive tractors and combines, from the drought of the 1930s to the excessive rainfall and flooding that began in 1993 to the present in that area of North Dakota.

While playing on the high school basketball team, Henry had been introduced to a young girl from the rival town of Hannah, N.D., 20 miles north of Alsen near the Canadian border. Her name was Verna Belle Anne Warwick. They dated a little, then maintained a courtship mostly by letter while she was a first-year nursing student at Mounds Park in St. Paul, Minn. On June 8, 1946, they were married. A small-town girl, she valiantly joined him in the role of

first-time farm wife.

Henry was gifted with a beautiful tenor voice and had soloed since his teenage years. Accompanied by Verna on the piano, their combined talents enriched the Alsen Swiss Mennonite Church, community, and school for 53 years. Hank's other passion was sports—especially in winter, when he had a break from work. He refereed basketball and was a skilled league bowler and a curling skip (captain) on multiple teams. He became an avid fan of the Minnesota Timberwolves and Minnesota Twins, hardly ever missing a broadcast game. One of his last and greatest joys was viewing a game from the Home Plate Box at Target Field.

God blessed their marriage with four children—Nola, Lauren, Steven and Holly, born between 1947 and 1955. Henry and Verna toiled hard and sacrificed, striving to provide better opportunities for their family. The marriages of their children added four wonderful children-in-law: Dennis, Sheryl, Deborah, and Michael, then 11 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

In 2000, Henry and Verna retired from farming, and moved to the Twin Cities to be nearer their families. They lived in an apartment, then a condominium in New Brighton, where on June 8, 2016, they observed their 70th wedding anniversary. After Verna passed away on September 18 of the same year, he sold the condo and moved to a lovely lower-level space in the home of his daughter and son-in-law in Blaine.

During their years in the Cities, Hank and Verna were blessed to acquire a whole new circle of friends in their places of residence and at GracePoint Church. Every Tuesday morning for 16 years, a group of dear Christian men met with Henry for coffee and donuts, a few hands of Rook, and a time of

laughter and fellowship (maintained until just one week before his death). Hank and Verna also savored Bethel and Northwestern college musicals, plays, and choral and jazz band concerts.

As Verna's, then Henry's, health began failing, family were happy to assist in multiple ways. Also priceless in this effort was a kind, gentle and skilled CNA, Tammy Mohr. They both loved and appreciated her help and soft presence—as they would that of another daughter.

Lean years and seasons of bounty. Toil, but satisfaction, in tasks accomplished. Sorrow, conflict and distress, then comfort, resolution and relief. The pain of goodbyes, and the joy of reunions. All were the fabric of Henry's life—all provided by the hand of a loving, faithful God. On September 5, 2017, after sensing the touches and voices of grateful family and friends in preceding days, he slipped quietly into the embrace of his Savior and Eternal Healer.

By Lauren Schmiess, son

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

SEP 9. 11:00 AM (CT)

GracePoint Church  
2351 Rice Creek Rd  
New Brighton, MN 55112

# Tribute Wall

CD

“ *Our sincere condolences to all the family of our dear friend, Hank. He was always kind and encouraging and so great to visit with. He always offered encouragement for our efforts in music and it was always a blessing to hear him share his musical gifts. Our thoughts and prayers are for your comfort in this time of loss. How comforting it must be to have the many special memories of Hank!*

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**Chuck & Alice Damschen** - September 16, 2017 at 09:02 AM