

100 years old: Albert Bahler celebrates life

Written by Darci Tomky



Whether he was farming, milking his dairy cows or playing trombone, Albert Bahler has watched Holyoke grow from dirt streets and horses and buggies to what it is now. In his 100 years, he's experienced several wars, the Dust Bowl, the Depression and unthinkable sadness, but through it all he and his wife Annie still say, "It's the best life you could ever ask for."

Born in the small town of Oregon, Mo. Sept. 18, 1909, Albert grew up on the family farm. Still looking to farm, Albert's dad bought land in Colorado. At 9 years old, Albert and his family packed up and set out for Holyoke in 1919—the place where Albert would live ever since. The Bahlers' possessions were shipped by train and the family made the long trek by car.

Albert, the second oldest, lived with his two sisters and one brother on their farm southeast of Holyoke. He attended Pleasant Valley school through the eighth grade.

"Everybody worked hard then," said Albert, recalling he got his first Hereford cattle in 1928—the beginning of a treasured profession and hobby. Not only did Albert raise registered Hereford cattle, he also showed and sold them at the Stock Show for 30 years.

In addition to cattle, Albert farmed corn, wheat and alfalfa hay. He said he started off farming with horses, switched to tractors for a short time and then went back to horses. He remembers buying his first tractor in 1942 for \$1,200. You just can't get equipment for that price any more, he said.

Ten Holstein baby calves began a new venture for Albert—dairy farming. He bought the calves in 1945 and ran the dairy until 1986. Albert said they milked twice a day, and 80 head of cattle was the most he milked at a time.

Referring to Albert's wife Annie, some have asked him lately, "Well how'd you put up living with Annie for 100 years?" and Albert simply replies, "I don't think I could find a 100-year-old woman, but maybe two 50-year-olds."

100 years old: Albert Bahler celebrates life

Written by Darci Tomky

Despite the jokes, it's obvious Albert and Annie have gone through a lot together in their 76 years of marriage.

Both Albert and Annie have lived in Holyoke for 90 years, both of their families moving to the area in 1919. Ironically enough, they didn't cross paths until 1931. Albert was playing trombone in an orchestra at a dance that Annie happened to be attending, and the rest is history. The two married in 1933 when Annie was only 16 and had three sons together.

After spending one year at Albert's parents' place, the couple lived in town for one year. For 12 years they lived at the E.A. Stickle Ranch followed by 52 years at their home just southeast of Holyoke. The past 10 years they lived in a house in town and moved to the Carriage House just last Sunday.

Even though the Bahlers have experienced much tragedy in losing their sons—Bob, Bill and Jack, they rejoice in their three granddaughters and seven great-grandchildren.

One thing that stands out about Albert and Annie is their view of money. Albert recalled living through the Depression era and simply said nobody could borrow money because nobody had any credit. It taught us the value of money, said Albert.

He remembered how his dad had bought land for \$60 an acre and then sold it for a mere \$12.50 an acre during the Dust Bowl.

Albert and Annie lived by the rule that they would never buy anything they couldn't pay for. As a result, the Bahlers have never had any debt and never had a single credit card. Because of their strong work ethic, Albert and Annie have been able to retire with plenty of money and haven't had to worry about paying off debt.

Annie regards themselves as being "mighty lucky" and says they "couldn't have found a better community." Albert and Annie have gotten involved in the Holyoke community the last 90 years whether it was attending the Lutheran church or Albert's 20 years of trombone playing in his band.

100 years old: Albert Bahler celebrates life

Written by Darci Tomky

Although the Bahlers have “quit running around now,” in the past they have enjoyed some traveling with two cruises and a couple bus tours in the U.S.

Now regarded as a centenarian, Albert celebrated his much anticipated 100th birthday Friday, Sept. 18. Albert’s older sister also lived to be 100 years old, and Albert joined fellow Holyokite Velma Biddle who reached the century-mark in August. Among all his birthday festivities, Albert was excited to get a birthday card all the way from Japan as well as a hand delivered card from Eileen Rudder of Holyoke who will also be turning 100 in December.

There is no doubt Albert still holds his claim to being the oldest man in Phillips County, and he certainly continues to add to his countless number of memories from the past 100 years.