

Westbrook

Featured Resident

Betty Hartel



Betty was the only child of John and Nova Gwin. She was born on a farm in Smithville. Her dad farmed and her mom stayed home. She attended school at Rocky Point Country School from first to eighth grade. In the spring of her freshman year, her family moved to Arley, MO. Her parents had bought the store, which was a gas station, grocery and feed store. The family lived in the apartment above the store. Her dad continued farming on their land in Smithville, while her mom ran the store with Betty's help. Betty really did not like having to pump gas for strangers. She was able to continue to attend Smithville High School since the bus ran through Arley. She graduated from Smithville and her family sold the store.

Betty met the neighbor boy about a month after they started managing the store. His name was Donald Hartel and he was four years older than her. Donald offered to take her to Smithville's Homecoming Dance that fall if her parents approved. Her parents did and they started dating. Donald was unable to serve in the war due to medical reasons and so he started helping Betty's father on the farm.

Betty and Donald were married in the fall of 1943. Betty had graduated that spring and was working at Staley's Milling Company. She quit working once they married. They lived on a farm owned by her father and Donald continued farming with her father. Eventually, her father had bought a farm in Arley, that was owned by Donald's uncle. Betty and Donald moved there and bought it from her father.

Donald farmed and raised sheep; they sold the wool and lambs. They also raised chickens, had hogs and a couple of milk cows. Betty always had a big garden. She would do at least 200 quarts of green beans, 60 pints of pickles (Don's favorite) and various other vegetables and meats. Instead of canning the corn, she froze it.

Donald and Betty had seven children – Colleen was born in 1946, Lane in 1949, Neil in 1950, Becky in 1955, Mark in 1957, Jane in 1958 and Ruthie in 1966. Betty said raising seven kids kept things very busy. They were involved in the Arley United Methodist Church and Betty taught Sunday School. A couple of the boys played basketball. Mostly the kids just helped out on the farm.

Betty loved to sew and made all the girls dresses, some shirts for the boys and her own clothing. With the scraps, she would sew quilt tops and her mother-in-law would hand quilt them. When her mother-in-law passed away, she started having them machine quilted. Betty also enjoyed cross stitching.

Donald liked to sing and Betty couldn't sing a note. Betty loved to dance, but Donald had no sense of rhythm and couldn't dance. They did play cards with other couples who had older children to help watch the younger ones. This worked for the first two children. But when the third one came along, they decided it was easier to not try and play.

Donald and Betty moved off the farm into Arley proper. Donald started making cabinets, furniture and building houses. He continued to farm for a few years with their son, Lane. Lane eventually bought the farm and continues to farm it today.

They traveled out to California, Nevada and New Mexico to visit Donald's cousins. They also took some trips back east to Georgia, Maine and Niagara Falls. Betty would plan the trips, what they wanted to see and where they would stay. They camped some and then they bought a camper. Donald loved to drive and did all the driving on these trips.

Donald was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2013. Betty spent much of her time with him at Oakridge of Plattsburg Nursing Home. He passed away in April of this year. At which time, Betty moved from Arley to Westbrook Villas. Her favorite thing about living here is not having to cook.

Betty has always loved to read. However, her eyesight has gotten to the point that she can no longer read. She now enjoys listening to books on tape. She highly recommends reading a lot. She says, "Reading imparts knowledge. The more you read, the more you learn."

Besides her seven children and their spouses, Betty has two grandsons and seven granddaughters.

They all really went above and beyond to take of my mother. They provided a safe and helpful environment. ~ Mary S

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