



Charles Maurice Peterson

July 22, 1927 - November 20, 2007

Charlie Peterson was born on July 22, 1927 in Tekamah, NE, 2nd of six children to Leslie Peterson and Eldora Peterson. He is survived by all his siblings: LeRoy of Montana, Peter of Colorado, Veda of Minnesota, Vada of California, and Delbert of Omaha. Charlie's parents were hard working, strong, faithful and trustworthy, all qualities they passed on to their son. Charlie learned a lot, much of what he learned was by doing, and sometimes the results were not as anticipated, so he learned even more. As a youngster and youth, Charlie attended school in Tekamah, graduating from Tekamah High School in 1945. He attended church at First Methodist, in Tekamah. For those who may not know, Charlie had an unwavering work ethic and a sense of customer service that would be very rare in today's work force, generally speaking. This story is really not about his work ethic, it is about Charlie and his family, because Charlie was all about family, but we will begin with some work information only because it leads us to a very special place. As a young man Charlie held a number of jobs doing a variety of different things. For example Charlie worked as a blacksmith. He had a job running the projector at the movie theatre, back when the movie reels were six feet in diameter. He assembled farm implements for a local dealer, built homes and worked at a gas station. While in each of those situations, he gained knowledge and skill, working at the gas station, as it turned out, was particularly fortuitous for Charlie; that was where he met a pretty, young school teacher, Lila O'Brien. For years after he said repeatedly that it was her

brown eyes, that first attracted him to this beauty who would become his partner, his best friend, the mother to his children and his steadfast, lifetime soul mate. Charlie often joked that Lila was the only lady he ever dated twice. In actuality that confirms that Charlie was indeed a very, very smart guy. Lila was a prize, and he treated her like every bit the gem that she was. He was always the guy who gave the mushy birthday cards and valentines that told in words what he felt in his heart and showed in his actions. There is a Mother's Day tale of Lila, deciding to be funny and circling several items from a catalog, then strategically placing the catalog where Charlie was sure to see it. When Mother's Day arrived, Lila was completely surprised to see that Charlie had gotten her everything she circled. Charlie adored Lila and was totally, absolutely smitten with her throughout fifty five years of marriage.

It was August 8th of 1948 when they married. Together they worked various farms in Burt County, living near both Charlie's folks and Lila's sister, husband, and their kids. In 1952 Doug was born, followed by Denise in 1955, Diane in 1957 and Dan in 1961. During these years all of Charlie's siblings and his parents relocated; most to California and one to Montana, so Lila's family became his family. Lila and Charlie relocated too, moving to Omaha. Shortly after returning to Omaha, Charlie entered the nursery business where he spent the remainder of his life in, becoming sole proprietor of Bellaire Nursery several years later. The family lived in homes on Binney Street and Grand Avenue before moving to the old Keystone neighborhood, where they occupied several houses. In 1974 they brought the property in Bennington that served as Bellaire Nursery for more than three decades.

Charlie was a builder who was an expert at making something out of nothing. And in spite of his best efforts to keep this a secret, he was a care taker, soft touch, dyed-in-the-wool people pleaser and all about family. For example, so his kids could swing all year, in any weather, he hung swings from the rafters in the basement of the Boyd Street house, and maybe even better than that, he mounted a saddle on a really, really tall saw horse. It was, oh, about nine or ten feet above the floor. Of course, this can be confirmed by any of the

dozens of kids who donned a cowboy hat and climbed atop the sawhorse Trigger, imagining themselves riding off with Dale and Roy, waving and singing Happy Trails. In this same house, that was a very tight fit, Charlie changed walls and created two bedrooms where none had existed before. All of these efforts had but one goal, to make his wife and kids, his family happy. Oh, how he loved and cared for his family.

It was very important to Lila and Charlie that their kids know Grandma and Grandpa Pete. Even numbered year's from 1962 to 1970 found the Petersons traveling to California to celebrate Christmas with the Peterson side of the family. Can you imagine putting \$100 in your wallet, then loading the entire family, plus Uncle Boyd to help with the driving, into a 1957 Chevy, and heading west, driving straight through, sleeping in the car? Well, that was what Lila and Charlie did, and they did it because family was the most important thing. Lila and Charlie saw to it.

They shared a special enjoyment of Christmas, Charlie and Lila. Their house became a virtual wonderland, with festive decorations and the most delicious food. They decorated the house together, which, by the looks of it, must have taken months. Included in the lovely traditions was a worn, old, hand-me-down Christmas tree that they put up in the basement every year. Charlie strung lights and Lila set out a box full of indestructible ornaments. When the grandkids came for a visit, which was pretty frequently (guess why), they could decorate the tree. After they went home, Grandma and Grandpa "undecorated" the tree and the kids did it all again on their next visit. It was a bonus for the kids that their grandpa loved them and loved to build. He fashioned rocking horses, toy boxes, desks, doll beds, bric-a-brac shelves, and baseball cap trees, all showing the love they had for their grandkids. Because they loved having a house full of folks at Christmas, and wanted them all to be together in one room, Charlie's brother, Del, built a number of "Christmas" tables. These ingenious tables could be assembled and disassembled with ease, and when disassembled, occupied very little storage

space. Each Christmas, they were erected, then after the meal were quickly disassembled and stowed in their place until the next Christmas. The reason this could be done so quickly and efficiently was because Charlie had numbered each table top and leg. There was no question about which leg to attach to what top, and leg B3 never got attached to top C.

The list of stories goes on and on, some that will have you holding your sides with laughter pains, others bringing you to tears, and the whole gamut of emotions in between. There were endearing times with each child and grandchild, like the slightly illegal rides in the back of the pick-up. Grandpa Charlie let the kids ride in the back of the pick up in the fields of trees and nursery stock surrounding the house. And boy-o-boy, could Charlie make ice cream. If you never had Charlie's homemade ice cream, I am very sorry. That was an extraordinary treat, an absolutely ideal blend of cream, vanilla, eggs and sugar, perfectly whipped and frozen, then served on a hot summer night, with family all around. It doesn't get much better than that, folks. It was essential for the 4th of July picnic which included Charlie's annual fireworks display.

Charlie was pretty good at figuring things out, all kinds of things. Whatever challenge or puzzle presented itself, Charlie would forge ahead, logically, methodically and solve it. Lila once said that Charlie knew the Holy Spirit would guide him through life's challenges, presenting just the right information at the right time. While Charlie was not necessarily vocal about or inclined to share his love of God, his love and devotion to his family, his moral business practices and the kindness with which he treated everyone, abundantly reflected God's love.

Lila's Alzheimer's was very painful and perplexing to Charlie, from the very first signs, all the way through. Somewhere along the line her recipes began to taste different, her patience had limits and her previously unrestricted capabilities became restricted. He could see and hear and touch Lila, but sometimes couldn't reach her, and progressively, slowly, inexplicably she slipped away from the world, the family and last of all, from Charlie. All

through those years he endured a soreness reaching into the tender center of his aching heart. Those who observed this also felt pain and sorrow; in addition, they felt a profound sense of admiration for this patient and devoted love of Lila's life. In spite of the pain this people-pleasing, tree planting, toy making man remained steadfast and was not resistant when quietly and almost without notice, Lila passed the baton, which Charlie accepted without hesitation, and Charlie became the household manager. He took over management of Lila's care, including dispensing medications and tending hygiene as well as management of the house, groceries, laundry his own diabetes, all things Lila had done, forever. Few accomplishments can command greater respect than the sheer level of devotion and faithfulness he achieved because of his love for Lila.

In recent years, there were times of abject grief and uncertainty that pained Charlie terribly, particularly the passing of his son-in-law and the unexpected loss of two grandsons within a short period of time. In addition, Dan was involved in a frightening equipment accident requiring a lengthy recuperation and Denise survived a potentially life threatening encounter with anhydrous ammonia. In spite of the grief, mourning, and anxiety he felt, he found the strength to help other family members endure theirs. It was in these situations where it was most evident that Charlie was calling on the leading of the Holy Spirit.

He was always taking care of someone, making a provision of one type or another. Simply stated, that was a part of his nature. Just a few days ago, Denise left his hospital room to get a cup of coffee. Charlie didn't want her to have that expense because of him, and absolutely insisted on buying her a cup of coffee. Delbert's wife Jean remarked that during Del's hospitalization following a cardiac bypass Charlie visited and called daily, making his love and concern known just by his presence. Because so much of this happened without Charlie calling attention to it, many felt his care, almost without knowing he was extending it. That is probably what we will all miss the most, that quiet, heartfelt care that he extended, effortlessly, unobtrusively and

prayerfully. And for as much as we will all miss the fun-loving, laughter behind which great care existed, we must all be grateful for his faith in our Savior and the power of the Holy Spirit. In your sadness, if your heart will let you, try to imagine Charlie being together, reunited with the restored Lila, at Jesus' feet. If you can recall Lila lighting candles of the advent wreath, think of her doing so, with Charlie, in heaven. Next Sunday, the first Sunday of Advent, she will light the candle of hope.

Tribute Wall



“ *Charles Maurice Peterson*

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