

The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2017

CUSTER COUNTY, ARNOLD, NEBRASKA 69120

(USPS 032480)

SINGLE COPY: 50 CENTS

VOLUME 101, NUMBER 26

They’ve a Story to Tell

War bride Maureen Olofson ends up loving life on the farm.

20th in a Series on
Arnold’s “Young at Heart”
Residents

By Darlene Rimpley

How does a young lady who was born and raised in Stortford, England, end up living in Nebraska?

Did she plan on living in America when she was growing up?

Does she like Nebraska?

Will she stay?

The answers to the above questions are: She was a war bride, no, yes and yes.

Maureen Pavitt was born on May 27, 1928, in the town of Bishop’s Stortford, about 30 miles north of London. Her mother, Dorothy, was from Belfast, Ireland, and her father, Ernest, was an English boy. Both were in the navy, where they met. Maureen had three sisters - two older and one younger. The older two are now deceased.

When Maureen was 11 years old, World War II broke out, and the lives of those in England dramatically changed. Each person was issued an ID bracelet, a medical card, a gas mask, and they had to have a torch (flashlight). There were no streetlights, and all windows had blackout curtains on them.

If somebody wanted to go out of a house, all lights had to be off when the door was opened. They were allowed six ounces of meat per week, and the family raised a huge garden, which was the main source of food. Their new clothing purchases were also limited. They did not own a car because they couldn’t afford petrol. The family did not have any horses, which Maureen loved, but she had a friend who owned some, so she did get to ride. She had a



Maureen Olofson displays treasured photos of her youth in England and in the United States after marrying a Nebraska soldier, Darrell Olofson. (Sentinel photo)

dog named Jane.

Maureen recalls that when the planes would leave from London to go out on a bombing raid, residents could tell by the sound if all of the planes had returned or if there were any missing. The German planes flew over their city to get to London on their bombing raids. Bishop’s Stortford was bombed, causing cracks in the Pavitt’s ceilings. The family taped all of the windows to

keep them from breaking.

Maureen’s father tried to reenlist when the war broke out, but they would not take him, so he worked in a factory. Her mother was a nurse in a hospital, and she would often bring several of the patients home with her to give them a time of visiting and a touch of home life.

Maureen attended a girls’ church school, and after graduation, she went to London to

work in a doctor’s office. Interestingly enough, this doctor was the one who invented cat gut that would dissolve in a suture. She went home every weekend to see her parents.

An airbase that the Americans had built was three miles outside of Stortford, and Maureen would go there to the dances. At one Saturday night dance, Maureen, who was a ballroom dancer, was asked to dance by one of the servicemen. She agreed, but found that he was a terrible dancer, so they sat down and visited the rest of the dance. His named was Darrell Olofson, and he was from Nebraska. When the dance was over, he asked if he could walk her home. She told him it was three miles, and his reply was that he liked to walk. Before saying goodnight, he asked if he could see her the next night, but she had to go back to London the next day. After a time, Darrell asked Maureen to marry him, and she said, “I’ll have to think about it.” As time has told, she did finally say yes, and she took him home to get her mother’s approval.

In 1955, when Darrell was sent back to the United States to be discharged, Maureen joined him. She first visited with an aunt who lived in New York, and the couple then traveled to Mississippi to Maureen’s sister’s home, where Darrell and Maureen were married on February 5, 1955.

They traveled to Gothenburg by bus, where Darrell’s folks, John and Ethel, met them. There was snow on the ground

and it was cold.

“I looked around and said, ‘Where are all the people?’” Maureen said.

The elder Olofsons moved into Arnold, and Darrell and Maureen became the farmers. She loved the farm, where she had the chance to ride horses, and she learned to milk, feed calves, drive the tractor and mow hay. She got bucked off a horse a couple of times, but that didn’t quell her enthusiasm for riding.

The Olofsons raised Appaloosa horses and belonged to an Appaloosa horse club, entering competitions.

Maureen had always been interested in Indian beading and made herself an Indian costume out of white deerskin, which she wore in a Lincoln horse show, as well as local and area parades. She also had appropriate Indian dress for her horse.

Learning to drive was an interesting experience for Maureen. Anyone who has driven on unoiled, unpaved, loose dirt and curving farm roads would understand. On top of that was the fact that Americans drove on the “wrong side” of the road.

Maureen became a naturalized citizen that involved three trips to Lincoln where she took tests, mostly concerning American history. (I have heard it said that persons who become naturalized are more knowledgeable about the history of the United States than natural born citizens due to the large amount of studying they need to do.)

After Maureen’s father passed

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WWII Bombings

Maureen recalls the days during World War II while growing up in England: “We were supposed to go downstairs when we thought we would be bombed, but we hardly ever did.”

Early Sentinel Deadlines

Due to the holidays, the Sentinel will have early deadlines coming up. For the December 28 issue, the deadline will be Thursday, December 21, at noon. The deadline for the January 4 issue will be Thursday, December 28, at noon.

Chamber Bucks Winners

Chamber held its first Chamber Bucks drawing on December 8, with the following winners announced: Pam Smith, Dillon Brown, Marla Krout, Gary Larreau, Barb Peterson, Eli Taylor, Wyatt Eggleston and Judy Christofferson. Each winner will receive \$25.00 in Chamber Bucks.

Eight winners will be drawn at each of three drawings. The next drawing will be held on December 15, followed by the final drawing on December 22. In order to enter the drawing, simply spend \$10.00 or more at a participating business and you will be given one ticket. Either deposit the signed ticket at the business or drop it off under the Christmas tree in the Chamber Bucks package at Pinnacle Bank. You may enter as many times as you like with each purchase of \$10.00 or more.

Bank Drawing Winners Announced

Pinnacle Bank announced its Christmas Drawing winners on December 8. Winning \$50.00 each were: Lane Chesley, Connie Westbrook, Michelle Preston, Clint Lewis, Mike Harvey, Mark Preston, Amber Downing, Carolyn Bowers, Leron Bierman and Deb Atkins. Ten more winners will be drawn on December 15 for a total of \$1,000.00 given away in the two drawings.

Thank you for shopping Arnold and playing in Pinnacle Bank’s Christmas drawing.

Business Owner Brings About Change

Focus On Your Hometown Businesses

A-1 Auto Repair

Fourth in a monthly series on what businesses and services the community of Arnold has to offer.

By Pepper Werner

Moving from Lincoln to Arnold in May 2011 brought about big, positive changes for Josh Bernt. He was working as a shop foreman/parts manager where he dispatched work to the techs that he worked with. They serviced all makes and models, and he also had his own shop that he worked in during the evenings and weekends. When he heard that Ray Pearman was looking for a buyer for A-1 Auto Repair in Arnold, he decided to pursue the opportunity.

As a young kid, new to town, the idea of buying an established business was a little daunting. Josh worked for Ray for six months when they discussed the purchase possibility. Financing is tough on a young person with little collateral, even with a business plan in hand. After being laughed out of several banks, Bernt’s tax accountant took a hard look at his business plan and recommended a banker friend in Gothenburg; that is when the change began. The A-1 purchase loan was approved on a referral, plan and big dreams and the new owner took over in January 2013. Ray was gone and Josh was alone.

Josh considers A-1 Auto Repair to be a general service shop where he is equipped to do factory scheduled maintenance such as belts, batteries and oil changes. He also offers electrical diagnosis and repair, engine performance diagnosis and repair, and flash program-

ming on newer cars which might consist of a simple computer update. This is not required at a dealership since he has the diagnostic equipment in his shop. He has an on-car brake lathe that turns the rotors while they remain on the car. This gets the work done within factory specifications which is ideal for longer brake life and speed of repair.

There is always a need for a repair shop even in small areas like the Village of Arnold. Bernt does 80 hours of training per year in an attempt to keep up with the vehicle changes. Some classes are online or in the classroom so he can see how different systems change each year. He would like to see that mandated in his industry. There is little federal or state regulations on repair shops. Anyone, with little or no training, can open a shop and work on cars. A few states hold very strict guidelines on qualifications, but unfortunately, Nebraska is not one of them.

Josh states that his biggest struggle with his business is scheduling. Parts delivery conflicts, unforeseen work or repairs - rusted bolts, seized parts - and emergency work are all part of the issue. It’s difficult to plan on the next repair job when all three lifts are filled but work has come to a standstill while waiting on a delivery or confirmation from the customer to continue. One solution to this struggle would be man-power - additional mechanics - people to do the work



Josh Bernt has moved forward with improvements since purchasing A-1 Auto Repair. (Pepper Werner photo)

while Josh coordinates/plans/schedules and places orders; the required day-to-day time eaters that are needed to keep the business wheels turning.

When Bernt took over the business nearly five years ago, he had a full-time mechanic. Within four months he hired another and things clicked along until the end of 2014. Changes happen, opportunities present themselves and people move away. So, Josh found himself working alone. He hired a part-time high school student that did everything from sweep the floor, change oil and minor repairs - an apprentice-type kid that wanted to be a mechanic. It was a good partnership that

lasted for over a year-and-a-half when the apprentice left for college. A-1 Auto Repair was a great foundation for him and proved to be the confirmation that he needed for his future endeavors.

Since then, Josh has had five different employees and discouragement is setting in. They either don’t want to work or have outside issues that interfere. It is a big concern to find willing workers in a small town that are qualified, so Bernt is on the hunt again. He is looking for a person with some background, not necessarily a master mechanic, but trainable and someone that is willing to

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