

Barn Quilt Number 278 Honors Family Matriarch

Shawano County's 278th barn quilt, located on the farm of Dave and Cheryl Wagner, N1367 Maple Road, Seymour, has been sponsored by family friend, Barb Schevers, as a tribute to Grace Vissers, Cheryl's grandmother, who died on March 5 this year, the day before what would have been her and her husband Hank's 71st wedding anniversary. "Grace was an industrious farm wife who loved the Packers and Badgers, was an excellent dancer and a wonderful entertainer," Schevers said. "Grace and I enjoyed many pleasant travels and drives despite the death of her husband, Hank, in 1990 and the death of mine in 1997. She was truly 'Amazing Grace' who could light up a room in seconds. I'll always remember the wonderful hours we spent driving around to see the barn quilts in northeastern Wisconsin."

"Barb was a cherished friend of grandma's," Cheryl said. "We can't thank her enough for her wonderful contribution and dedication to Grace's memory. We truly appreciate Barb's generosity and for choosing our farm for the symbolic quilt."

The pattern selected for the barn quilt is called Summer Star Flower. "I think Grace would love its bright colors," Schevers said. The quilt was painted by the Shawano County barn quilt committee and was put on display by LeRoy Raddant and Bruce Teetzen of Raddant Electric in Shawano.

Grace and Hank raised their family on the Vissers dairy farm. Her daughter, Betty Jean, married Len Zablocki of Hofa Park, also a dairy farmer. Len and Betty had owned the farm since he bought it from his parents, Joseph and Dorothy Zablocki, in 1969. Betty died December 9, 2011.

Dave, a native of Illinois, and Cheryl, met while they were attending UW-Platteville. In 2006, they took over the farm under a rent to own contract. They became the sole owners in 2012. They farm 220 acres and have a Holstein milking herd of 40 cows along with over 60 head of young stock. They have a son, Zeke, who is ten years old.

The village of Hofa Park was started by John J. Hof in 1878. He only sold land to Polish families, originally totaling 14 families. Over the years, the land was logged off and more than 1000 Polish families settled in the area. On August 16, 1886, a tragic forest and prairie fire ravaged the area, traveling as far north as Coleman. It actually did as much damage as the more famous Pestigo fire of 1871. The house on the Wagners' farm has some of the charred boards from the fire in its construction.

Anyone who would like to participate in Shawano County's barn quilt project can contact project coordinator Jim Leuenberger at 715-524-5685 or via email at jamesmleuenberger@yahoo.com. You can also contact Patti Peterson, tourism director at the Shawano Country Chamber of Commerce, at 715-524-2139 or by email at tourism@shawano.com. A link on the Shawano Chamber Web site includes photos and information on every barn quilt on display in Shawano County. Just go to www.shawanocountry.com and click on the barn quilt icon.