EUGENE VAN ZEE

Following a bravely fought battle with Alzheimer’s, Eugene P. Van Zee, 90, of Gibson, passed away on September 26, 2014 in Oskaloosa. Although his memory had faded, his love of life and quiet demeanor were ever present.

Gene was born on October 23, 1923 in Oskaloosa, the second of three sons to Dick and Elizabeth (Brower) Van Zee. He grew up near Leighton and graduated from Pella High School in 1940. Gene proudly served his country in World War II in the Pacific Theater from 1943-46.

On September 7, 1947, Gene married Dorothy Perkins at the Little Brown Church in Nashua. Their marriage was blessed with three children, Steve, Robert and Rita. They farmed near Leighton until 1958, when they moved to Gibson, where Gene managed and later owned the Gibson Elevator. He thoroughly enjoyed the feed and grain business and valued the relationships he built with the area farmers. Gene operated the elevator along with his son Steve. Upon retirement, he returned to his farming roots by tending to the hardwoods and Christmas trees he planted on his small acreage in Gibson.

Gene’s greatest joy was spending time with his family, following his grandchildren’s activities, and being entertained by his great-grandchildren. Gene enjoyed bowling and traveling, especially trips to visit his two brothers. He appreciated beautiful wood and his carpentry projects were completed to perfection. Gene was especially proud of the two homes he helped build for his family.

He was a trustee and elder of the Gibson United Presbyterian Church, member of the American Legion Post #507, Supersweet Feed Focus Group, What Cheer Lions Club, and former mayor and city council member of Gibson.

Survivors include Dorothy, his loving wife of 67 years; his children, Steve of Gibson; Robert (Susan Hutchinson) of Deep River; and Rita (Phil) Striegel of Coralville; nine grandchildren, Joshua (Kristen) Van Zee of Oskaloosa, Heath (Samantha) Van Zee of Cedar Rapids, Ashley (Michael) Reif of Grinnell, Jeremy Van Zee (Megan Strong) of New Sharon, Kyle (Lindsay) Van Zee of Linden, Kevin (Clara) Van Zee of What Cheer, David Striegel (fiancee Brooke Gifford) of Thousand Oaks, Calif.; Scott (Miranda) Striegel of St. Anthony, Minn.; and Katie (Adam) Josephson of Ventura, Calif.; 12 great-grandchildren; sisters-in-law, Irene Perkins of Des Moines, Marilyn (James) Murphy of Runnells, Martha Perkins of Ottumwa, Harriet Van Zee of Dayton, Ohio; as well as many special nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents; daughter-in-law Dixie Van Zee; brothers, Glen Van Zee and Clarence (June) Van Zee; brothers-in-law, Paul Perkins and Kenneth Perkins, and a sister-in-law, Vivian Meyers.

Funeral services will be held Wednesday, October 1, 2014, at 10 a.m. in the Gibson United Presbyterian Church in Gibson, with Rev. Hans Cornelander officiating. Burial with military honors will be in the Evergreen Cemetery near Leighton. A procession will form at the Gibson United Presbyterian Church at 1 p.m. Wednesday for those wishing to go to the cemetery.

The Bates Funeral Chapel is in charge of the arrangements. Memorials may be made to the Gibson United Presbyterian Church or Keokuk County Hospice.