

Wilma Bissett Of Deep River Succumbs Tuesday

● Wilma Bissett, 62, of Deep River, died early Tuesday morning at a Grinnell hospital where she had been a patient for the past week.

Funeral arrangements are pending at the Steffy funeral home in Montezuma.

A lifelong resident of Deep River, Mrs. Bissett was the widow of Otto Bissett. She had served as the Deep River correspondent for The Herald-Register for several years.

Survivors include two daughters, Mrs. Wayne (Betty) Gillaspie of Deep River and Mrs. Les (Phyllis) Vorba of Traer.

THURSDAY, JULY 1, 1965

Wilma Bissett Services Held In Deep River

Services were held for Mrs. Otto (Wilma) Bissett Friday, June 25, at the Deep River Christian Church at 10:30 a.m. The Rev. John Hansel officiated. Charles Dunham was the soloist, accompanied by Mrs. Vaughn Icenbice.

Casket bearers were Calvin Barnes, Leland Winegarden, Ellis Brown, Wayne Keller, Louis Keller and Dean Evans. Interment was in the Golden Rod cemetery.

Wilma, daughter of Fred and Harriet Keller, was born in Deep River, Iowa, July 16, 1902, and died June 22, 1965. She was 62.

She attended the local school and was a life member of the Christian Church.

Wilma Bissett Dies; Was Town's No. 1 Baby Sitter

By CHUCK

Wilma Bissett. Everybody knew her. She was an institution in Deep River, the last surviving daughter of Deep River's pioneer businessman, Fred Keller. A lifelong resident, she was related to most of the families in town.

Wilma was a one-woman newspaper. She knew everybody's great aunts and uncles, all about the time they put the cow up in the school; she was first to know who would get married, or should. She knew when the babies were due, and remembered most everyone's birthday.

Wilma spent her life at the west end of town, born there when the depot was the center of all life for miles around. She grew up when Deep River was a growing town, with two dray lines running from the depot up Main street and to the country; the hotels down the block were always full then, and the horse sales at Deep River put our little town on the map in the teens and twenties.

Wilma liked to recall when she was just a girl, and could handle horses as well as most men. When not 80 pounds copping wet, Wilma would drive in a string of ponies for her dad. A spirited young woman, she never had advanced schooling. But her character was molded in such a way to leave its mark here, and a lot of sorrowing hearts this week.

Life was not always easy for Wilma, but she accepted whatever came her way, and made the best of it. And "the best of it" around Wilma meant a warm home, fun and merriment, and all the little kindnesses that can flow from a heart big as a bushel basket. They say her passing was due to "heart failure." One thing certain, this old gal's heart never failed before.

Wilma had a quiet, loyal husband to share life at the west end of town. As years went by, the elevator hotels built

yard and seed house all departed — but there were still Mr. and Mrs. Otto Bissett and their blacksmith shop. Also the two Bissett girls; Wilma and Otto spared no effort to see to it they got the schooling they wanted, and a good start in life.

Their own children were few beside the scads of little ones Wilma helped raise. Wilma rocked a million miles in that little cottage with a child on her lap. She was a second mother to a whole generation around Deep River, and more recently was "Gramma" to another set.

Wilma has worked at one time or another — usually "just helping out" — a most every business on Main street. She was long a familiar voice at the Deep River telephone exchange. A humble person, she was also fiercely proud of her independence, her ability to make her own way.

If there was hard work to be done, worse than the rest of us were too good to do, Wilma would. She cooked, scrubbed, sewed, and prepared this and that for her church, the Legion, the firemen or wherever she was needed. One job she liked so well, it almost became permanent, was with the carnival that used to play in Deep River every year. She and Otto and the girls were "on the road" with the carnival; Wilma managed the rides while Otto did the electrical wiring.

Wilma always said she wanted her roses while she was with us, not after she had gone. She probably never got her share of roses, but how did we know there was so little time? She was only 62.

(If this does not read like an ordinary obituary, remember Wilma was not an ordinary person. Among the places Wilma worked was the RECORD, where her spirit, loyalty, competence and ever-present cheerfulness won our admiration, affection. So long, Wilma.)

On August 23, 1922, she was united in marriage with Otto Bissett. They made their home in Deep River all of their married life. Wilma worked for the telephone company as an operator, being one of the first operators in the community. Since the death of her husband in 1959, she has continued helping her friends and neighbors. For the past few years she was a correspondent for the Republican.

Beside her husband, she was preceded in death by an infant daughter, Mary Jane.

She is survived by two daughters, Phyllis Vorba, of Traer, and Betty Gillaspie, of Deep River; and two grandchildren, Susie and Danny Gillaspie.