

# Rhodes residents mourn loss of three local leaders

In a community of less than 300 people, the deaths of three long-time residents within a month leaves nearly everyone affected, either as a family member or a friend. All of them lived virtually their entire lives in Rhodes and last names weren't necessary. Everyone knew them as Leo, Pete, and Juanita. Each one brought their unique talents to the community. They married people who lived most of their lives in the Rhodes community, and raised their families here.

Leo Malloy was 81 years old when he passed away January 22, 2003. The last few years, he enjoyed driving around town, stopping to talk to anyone who was outdoors or checking in with his four sons. Leo loved to talk.

In his younger years, he farmed with his father, was a city councilman, a volunteer fireman, and did electrical work on farm buildings and barns that were not wired when electricity first became available. He liked fixing radios and television sets as a hobby. He was the Sexton (1949-1995) for St. Joseph's Cemetery, located on land east of town donated by his great-grandfather Joseph Goodman.

Leo married Elizabeth Malechek and they raised their four sons, Tom, Dennis, Mick and Pat, on the family farm. The Malloy farm is a Century Farm and Leo and Liz received the plaque in 1984 at the State Fair in Des Moines on their 40th wedding anniversary. In 1973, Leo and Liz purchased a cabin at Holiday Lake and spent many pleasant hours boating on the water.

Unlike Leo, Gerald "Pete"

Richeson was a man of few words. He could go a whole day without saying a word. Pete's parents lived on a farm east of Rhodes and he grew up there. Ruby remembers the two of them walking hand in hand from his farm home to her home in Rhodes. Pete and Ruby Walker were married in 1936. They raised two sons, Melvin (deceased) and Jerry. Pete and Ruby celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in 1996. They were privileged to live long enough to see a great-granddaughter married.

Pete worked on the railroad and farmed east of Rhodes. He loved doing carpenter work. He and Ruby moved from house to house in Rhodes, fixing them up and selling them. Pete designed the new basement staircase at the Rhodes United Methodist church. Unfortunately, Pete fell from the roof of the UM parsonage while working on it, and was no longer able to continue his carpentry career.

Pete loved fishing almost as much as carpentry. His favorite fishing hole was Hendrickson's Marsh where he spent many hours fishing for bullheads. In the last few years, Pete and Ruby went riding every afternoon so he could see how the crops were doing and just to enjoy being outdoors. Pete was 87 years old when he died on February 1, 2003.

Juanita Wignall Gibbs was 70 years old when she passed away on February 12, 2003. She lived her entire life in the Rhodes community.

She attended school in Rhodes and was junior class President in

1948-49. Graduating high school in 1950, she married Marvin Gibbs the next year.

They raised a daughter, Nancy Gibbs Mercer, and a son, Bob. Marvin served in the U.S. Army during the Korean conflict. He was a member of the VFW and Juanita was a member of the Auxiliary. They enjoyed the camaraderie of the Legionaries and were always very involved in the activities. Marvin died in 1993.

Juanita was very involved in local sports programs and was elected Secretary/Treasurer of the Rhodes Ball Association in 1969. She was active in community affairs, genealogy, and the Alumni Association.

Juanita was Chairman of the 1983 centennial history book committee. The book was well received and continues to be a treasured reference for community history. She loved to bowl and is listed in the Marshalltown Bowler's Hall of Fame. In 1996, Juanita was proud to have five generations of her family living in the Rhodes area. In later years, she was involved in the Rhodes Historical Society and in publishing the local newspaper.

All of these people gave of themselves, carrying on a tradition of service to the community established by their ancestors. To simply say they will be missed doesn't do justice to their many contributions. We join in expressing our heartfelt sympathy to their families.

By Alice Karsjen