

CLEO C. SMITH



This picture of Cleo Smith was taken in the summer of 1982. Wood River was celebrating its Centennial. Cleo was proud of his home town. He spent many hours compiling scrap books of the place he called his home, Wood River.

The Town of Wood River practically began its history with the advent of the Union Pacific railroad in the sixties, but it was not until 1884 that it began to exist at its present location. It had hitherto been located two and a half miles west of its present location. As early as 1861 a number of Irish families had begun to settle in the community.

Wood River, Hall County, Nebraska is situated in the beautiful and extremely fertile Wood River Valley, on the main line of the Union Pacific railroad, distant about sixteen miles from Grand Island. The Wood River runs to the northward less than a mile, while the broad and shallow Platte River winds its way to the southward, distant some five miles.

The above facts are taken from "History of Hall County, Nebraska" by A.F. Buechler and R.J.

CLEO C. SMITH

Cleo C. Smith was born November 15, 1905 in Wood River, Nebraska to Clinton and Etta Thompson Smith. He was the youngest child. There were two older brothers, Hearn and Wendell, and a sister Reta.

He graduated from Wood River High School in 1924. That fall he enrolled at the Grand Island Business College.

Cleo and Alice Bald were married August 9, 1930. They had three daughters, Marilyn Bush, Carol Lee Harrison, Marcia Bloom, and six grandchildren. Cleo encouraged his grandchildren to achieve and to enjoy life. All six of them are graduates of universities or colleges.

He worked in Connor's Drug Store in Wood River during "The Depression Years." He was employed at the Cornhusker Ordnance Plant west of Grand Island and the Naval Depot at Hastings, Nebraska. In 1957 he went to work for General Services Administration at the Denver Federal Center. He retired from that position in June, 1971.

His years in Colorado were especially "Good Years." He was a Charter Member of the Arvada Elks and enjoyed the friendship of its members. He was on their Traveling Bowling Team. However when the time came to "retire" -- his plans were definitely to return to the little home he had built in Wood River in 1952. He felt that he was very fortunate to be able to return to the place of his "roots." Cleo, his wife Alice, and their three daughters graduated from Wood River High School. He had a special feeling for his alma mater. He loved to sing the School Song. While living in Colorado, he managed to return to many of the Alumni Banquets. After he retired, he was able to be present every year. In 1974, his 50th year, he hosted open house for his classmates. He was a member of the Presbyterian Church, serving as a deacon. He especially enjoyed the singing of old hymns in the church service.

Cleo had good health and was able to travel. He and his wife Alice had two trips to Europe, two to Hawaii, and others to many places of interest in the United States. During his retirement years he also enjoyed bridge, golfing, playing cards with his friends at the Legion Club and his neighbors. He became an avid "Bird Watcher" -- he took great pleasure in feeding them, along with the squirrels and rabbits.

Cleo felt strongly that a smaller community was an ideal place to live in as one grows older. He was truly blessed -- he lived the "Best Years" of his life, his Retirement Years, in his little home in the Community of Wood River, Nebraska.

Cleo died June 20, 1986.