

Daris Daniel Bittner, 88, of Carrington, ND, died on Sunday, February 18, 2018, at Golden Acres Nursing Home, Carrington, ND.

Daris was the eldest child of Alfred and Elizabeth Bittner, and was born on August 27, 1929. He attended school at the Cathay Public School. After school, Daris began farming on his home place, ultimately marrying Mabel Gladys Gussiaas on November 7, 1952, where they farmed and ranched, until moving to Carrington.

Daris loved farming and ranching. He and Mabel worked tirelessly as a team in their work . . . it was their true passion. Daris was particularly passionate about his beef cattle, his purebred quarter horses, and even his beloved chickens that he continued to nurture for several months, even after moving to Carrington. Each of his animals found a special place in his heart, bringing him a great measure of joy.

Sunday afternoons would often find Daris and Mabel taking a drive out to the pastures, with Daris getting out walking among the cattle that would typically come running from the far corners of the pasture to greet him. It was during those interactions that he could assess which ones needed to be medicated later for a touch of foot rot, or a different malady that needed to be addressed with a horse and a rope, within the next day or so.

Those were times of studied reflection that he most seemed to relish. It was in those moments, that he transcended place and time . . . minutes could easily become hours. For years, he would gear up for the annual cattle run with family and friends joining in to herd the cattle back home from the respective pastures, to winter at the home place.

Daris was in his element when afforded the opportunity to talk about, or to study the lineage and pedigrees of his beloved cattle and horses. It was not merely his own cattle that he enjoyed. He loved nothing more than going to another ranch, to get a tour from another enthusiastic herdsman, whose expertise he admired, The Bar 5 ranch in Canada, was just one such ranch he delighted in visiting and cultivating relationships.

As busy as Daris was, he always made time to visit a neighbor, friend, or total stranger. He was never too busy to lend a helping hand to one who may find need of it. He virtually never met a stranger, always willing to share a smile, a warm greeting, or swap a story. Whether with a neighbor, or a new friend, whose name he had simply not yet learned, in Minot, Fargo, or a Minneapolis airport, he engaged each with his own brand of characteristic warmth.

Daris was actively involved in his community through the years. He served several terms as a County Commissioner for Wells County, always enjoying the many county fair acts he helped arrange, including Performer, Leroy Van Dyke, a fellow rancher and performer, who had become a personal friend of his, with whom he maintained close contact through the years. He cherished the lifelong friendships made through those encounters.

In conjunction with the fair, he also served one of the least favorite jobs – Racing Secretary, a job that called for a measure of toughness and diplomacy. It was in those moments that he came to know and appreciate so many of his Native American friends, who were involved in horse racing, from Dunseith, and Belcourt. He stayed in touch with a number of them over the years. He also served as a 4-H Club leader for many years. Additionally, he served several terms on the Cathay Township board. He was also a Brand Inspector for a number of years, for the state of ND.

Daris and Mabel always retained a strong commitment to their church, attending faithfully. In earlier years, they attended Stavanger Lutheran Church, located in rural Cathay. After that, they attended First Lutheran Church, in Fessenden. Later, when they moved to Carrington, they became active members of Trinity Lutheran Church. Their children, while a tad impatient at times, ultimately grew accustomed to being among the last to leave church most Sundays, given Daris and Mabel's tendency to love visiting with any who elected to stay after.

Daris is survived by his wife, Mabel, of Carrington, ND; one son, Mark (Sherri) Bittner, and one daughter, Tamara Kost of Fessenden, ND; one grandson, Dusty (Melissa) Kost and their 3 daughters, Kadence, McKenzie and Madison of Cathay, ND; two sisters, Verna (Fred) Freeman, of Carrington, and Delores (Ray) Scherr of Minnewauken, ND; as well as many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by an infant daughter, his father and mother, Alfred and Elizabeth Bittner; brother Vernon; son-in-law Ross Kost.