



Joe Dobrowski

January 31, 1906 - January 14, 2013

Wibaux, Montana: Joseph Henry Dobrowski, long-time resident of the St. Philips, Montana community, passed away Montana, January 7, 2013, at the Wibaux County Nursing Home, Wibaux. He was taken ill four days previous. At the time of his passing, Joe had attained the age of 106 years, 11 months, and 7 days, earning him the distinction of being Montana's oldest resident. Joe had aspired to this goal, and responded with "Hallelujah!" when he learned he had achieved it. Visitation will be held from 3:00 P.M. until 5:00 P.M. on Sunday, January 13, 2013 at the Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home in Wibaux. A Vigil Service will be held at 7:00 P.M. on Sunday, January 13, 2013 at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Wibaux. A Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 11:00 A.M. on Monday, January 14, 2013 at St. Philip's Catholic Church in St. Philip's with Reverend Father Joseph Ponessa officiating. Rite of Committal will follow in St. Philip's Cemetery in St. Philip's. Silvernale-Silha Funeral Home has been entrusted with the arrangements. Joe was born January 31, 1906, in Roseau County, Minnesota, to Walter Joseph and Mary (Kierzek) Dobrowski .Walter and Mary were Polish immigrants. The family migrated from Minnesota to Montana in 1910, initially living with Mary's sister Josephine on her homestead. They eventually settled on a school section on Lamesteer Creek. Dobrowski brothers John, Joe, and Stanley started school at the same time, walking three miles to and from each day. Joe recalls the only words he knew in English were 1-2-3 and A-B-C. In 1917, John and Joe attended Catholic sister school at Fried, North Dakota, north of Jamestown,

North Dakota, a distance of 290 miles from home. They spent the year studying to read Polish and to transcribe Polish to English. When Joe was 14, his mother died during the Spanish Influenza epidemic. Not long after, his father was admitted to the Montana State Hospital. As a result, he left school after the eighth grade to help support his brothers and sisters. On April 25, 1933, Joe married Teresa Marciniak at the Church of St. Philip in St. Philips. Joe kept a handwritten accounting of the wedding expenses, which totaled \$122.38, noting it was money "well spent." They made their home five miles west of Golva, North Dakota, in Wibaux County, Montana, where together they worked the land for 40 years. They kept an average of 500 laying chickens along with 100 fryers for Teresa's Sunday dinners. They milked cows, raised hogs, fed steers in a feedlot, put up hay, sowed wheat, oats, barley, flax, and corn, tended a large vegetable garden and strawberry patch, and kept honey bees. Farming was strenuous in the early days. Much of the labor was provided by human hands and horses. Clothes were washed on a scrub board in a wash tub. Meat had to be canned because there were no refrigerators or freezers. The first electrical appliance Joe and Teresa bought, once their home was hooked up to rural electricity, was a refrigerator. At 65, Joe retired, turning the farmland and pasture over to his son Robert. In 1979, he and Teresa built a new home and moved to Wibaux. They raised a garden in town that was the envy of many. Joe enjoyed making whirligigs in his shop, doing long-stitch needlework, playing cards, and putting together jigsaw puzzles. In 2006, at the age of 100, he moved to Wibaux County Nursing Home to recuperate from pleurisy. Active in his church and community, Joe took to heart the words a teacher once told him, "Do the best you can in the service asked of you." He was the foreman and time-keeper for the 77-man Works Progress Administration crew that built the Lamesteer National Wildlife Refuge reservoir; clerk and school board member; chairman of the Stateline Telephone Co.; a director of the Farmers Union Oil Co., Golva Co-op Elevator, and Wibaux County Soil & Water Conservation District; and charter member and officer of the St. Philips Knights of Columbus Council. Joe was a loyal

customer of the First State Bank of Golva, maintaining an account with them for 89 years. He lamented his hearing loss, which took away his ability to participate in meetings, but it didn't affect his card playing. Joe was a formidable opponent when it came to gin or gin rummy. He even invented a card game of his own. His last gin marathon—three hours in length—was Christmas Day 2012 with granddaughter Jennifer (Dobrowski) Rogers. When asked the secret to his long life, Joe's response to doctors and laymen was, "I had to work hard when I was a young, and I just kept working." Joe was preceded in death by his parents; Teresa, his wife of 76 years; infant son, Joseph; infant grandson, Bruce; and son-in-law Dean Dormanen. He was the last living member among his siblings: brothers John (Frances), Stanley (Pauline), Edmund (Montana), Allie (Eileen); sisters Helen (Thomas) Gonsior, Mary (Charlie) Keller, Rose (Donald) Burling, Baby Regina, and Clara (Gene) Robison. He is survived by his children: Cecelia (Jim) Samuels of Dickinson, North Dakota; Teresa Ann (Ed) Kremers of Gillette, Wyoming; Francis (Patricia) Dobrowski of Reno, Nevada; Marie Dormanen of Fargo, North Dakota; David (Mary) Dobrowski of Missoula, Montana; and Robert (Jeri) Dobrowski of the home place in rural Wibaux County. He leaves behind 13 grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren, and 1 great-great-grandchild. Joe's family extends grateful and heartfelt thanks to the staff at the Wibaux County Nursing Home who welcomed Joe and Teresa with open arms and cheerful faces. When asked if we could get him anything or do anything, Joe always said he had everything he needed, noting "they take real good care of me." His only complaint was that he missed Teresa's cooking. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorials be made to the Wibaux County Nursing Home Boiler Fund, 712 S Wibaux St., Wibaux MT 59353. Remembrances and condolences may be shared with the family at: www.silvernale-silhafuneralhome.com.

Tribute Wall



“ *Joe Dobrowski*

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