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05/02/2012 - Virgil Lavern Norman

Funeral Services for Virgil Lavern Norman, of Crawford, Nebraska will be Wednesday, May 2, 2012 at 11:00 AM at the United Methodist Church in Whitney, Nebraska with Pastor Marsha Stauss.

Visitation will be Tuesday, May 1, 2012 at 7:00 PM at Chamberlain Chapel in Crawford.

Burial will be at the Whitney Cemetery.

He was born October 7, 1923 in Crawford, NE and passed away April 26, 2012 at the Chadron Community Hospital. He was the youngest of five sons born to David Elmer and Anna Carlson Norman. The family also included a younger sister. Lavern grew up on the family farm and graduated from Whitney High School in 1940. He was the Captain of the Whitney Mustang basketball team. He was also known to run a good race. As a young man, he ran a trap line.

He was drafted into the US Army in September 1944 and was assigned to the 184th Infantry in the Pacific. He served with his cousin Jacque Norman and together they survived the battle for Okinawa. Lavern received the Bronze Star for Bravery during the battle. He also received an award for being a keen marksman. He was honorably discharged from the United States Army November 2, 1946 as a Staff Sergeant after spending a year on a peace keeping mission in Korea. He returned home to his beloved Western Nebraska.

On November 21, 1951 he married Betty Mae Barth Richardson at the United Methodist Church in Chadron, NE. Betty had been widowed during World War II and the family included a son, Don Richardson. Lavern and Betty made their home first in Whitney and later in Chadron. To the union between Lavern and Betty, four girls were born, Jan Laurine, Nancy Kay, Katherine Anne, and Patricia Rae. Lavern said that children are a poor man's jewels.

Lavern earned his living shearing sheep, custom combining and farming. He was a kind man who loved animals, especially horses. He bred a horse that was later named Nebraska Thoroughbred Horse of the Year. He enjoyed bowling and was a pretty good bowler. He also liked to play cards. Lavern and Betty played bridge with a great group of folks from Whitney for over 25 years. He was proud of his Swedish heritage. His closest friends were his cousins. They loved to get together and visit and were known to laugh boisterously. Lavern liked to tinker and had several inventions including an innovative golf putter. He had a lovely singing voice and was an excellent dancer. He taught his daughters to dance by allowing them to stand on his feet while he whirled them around the living room.

Lavern was a life-long member of the United Methodist Church, worshiping at both the Chadron and Whitney churches. His faith meant a lot to him but it was a quiet faith. He drew on his faith in God during the very difficult days in the Pacific. He loved country western gospel music and the old time hymns. As Betty's health failed, he faithfully cared for her for over twenty years. His caring also included other people in the dialysis unit who needed a ride, a pillow or ice or a piece of one of his famous baked goods.

He loved his grandchildren, Jed and Amber Johnson, Aimee Norman, Jaime, Nicholas and Vanessa Watson. He was a good grandfather. There were many happy times with his grandchildren.

Later in life, Lavern found a special friend in Shirley Sefrna and they had many happy years together.

He was a good man and will be missed deeply by his family. He was preceded in death by his parents; wife Betty Mae; daughter Nancy Kay; brothers, Robert, Lee, Curtis, and sister Peggy Henry. He is survived by family

members, Donald J Richardson; Jan and Thomas Johnson and their children, Jedadiah and Amber; Katherine and Lynn Watson and their children Jaime, Nicholas and Vanessa; and Patricia and her daughter Aimee. He is also survived by brother Layne Norman.

Memorials are preferred to the United Methodist Church in Whitney, NE or the Crawford Volunteer Fire Department. Donations may be sent to Chamberlain Chapel, PO Box 970, Chadron, NE 69337.

Online condolences can be made at www.chamberlainchapel.com

Chamberlain Chapel of Crawford is in charge of arrangements.