

MEMORIAL TESTIMONY IN HONOR OF KATIE VANHANDEL

May 15, 2000

Katie VanHandel was born March 29, 1902 on the family farm in Sublimity. Katie was the 7th of 13 children born to Bill and Annie D. VanHandel.

The VanHandel farm was a self sufficient operation, almost a little city in and of itself. Whether it was blacksmithing, carpentry, spinning thread for cloth, tending livestock, collecting eggs, milking cows, hauling hay, canning food for the winter, or working ground, each family member had their own job.

The VanHandel family has been an integral part of the Sublimity Community. Through the years, the VanHandel's have given generously of their time and talents to aid various charities and organizations. Katie and her sisters were very well known for the beautiful quilts they made for church fund raising events, the support of Regis High School, and other charities. These quilts were also cherished gifts to family members as wedding and baby gifts.

As well as quilting, Katie was an expert in the art of tatting. Some may not know what tatting is, but if you have seen the pillow slips that have been donated to the church bazaar and have admired the beautifully detailed lace edging, chances are that was tatting done by Katie. Although tatting may be considered a tedious task for some, Katie continued to tat and embroider until about six weeks ago, even as her health was deteriorating.

Another thing that Katie and her family were known for, were those "King's Table" style meals. If you left their house without being thoroughly stuffed, it was no fault of theirs. A family member recalls counting 17 different food choices on the table for a single meal, and this was not a special occasion. And everything was made at home. If you were helping during threshing, or in later years, bay hauling, you would also get "lunch" at about 3:00 which included sandwiches and cold drinks. No wonder they never had any trouble getting young men to volunteer to help.

Katie, Christina, and Maggie attended church together every Sunday. There used to be a light pole in the center of the church parking lot. This light pole had been there for years. As the girls were leaving church, they didn't see the light pole, and hit it, rather forcefully. Katie ended up with two black eyes and the church decided it would be best to move the light pole.

Central to Katie's life was her faith in God, her love of St Boniface parish, and support of the Catholic Church. Katie and her family generously provided support to many missions, various charities, and provided financial and spiritual support to several young men entering the priesthood. Age was never a reason not to help at St. Boniface when there was a need. Whether it was helping at the parish dinner, altar society breakfast, or painting the sanctuary on scaffolding, if there was a need, Katie and her family were more than willing to help in any way they could. Daily prayer and praying the rosary were part of her everyday routine. In Katie's final weeks, she held her rosary day and night, and said "I want to go home." We weren't sure what she meant by this, but it soon became apparent that she meant she wanted to go to heaven, to be at home with her mom and dad and her many brothers and sisters.

Katie was an avid pinochle player and an intense "aggravation" player. She had no mercy on any of her opponents, priests included. Several past priests have enjoyed the fun of playing pinochle and aggravation with the VanHandel girls. Even into her elderly years, Katie could keep track of all the positions of each player in the game.

Katie was the last living member of the Bill and Annie D. VanHandel family, but the VanHandel family continues through their many descendents and the wonderful memories we have of them.