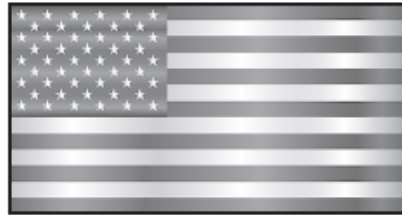
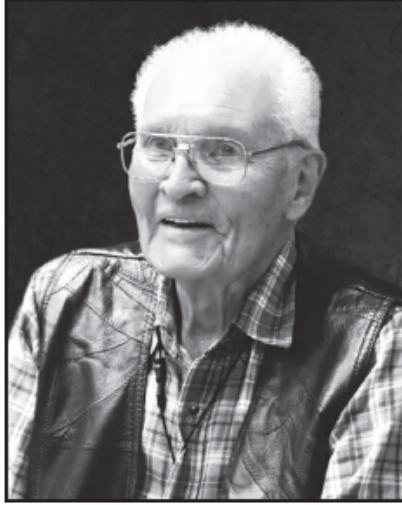


Willis Martin Franz
August 14, 1920 - November 22, 2023



Willis Martin Franz, 103, of Newcastle, died Wednesday, November 22, 2023, at Weston County Health Services.

Willis was born August 14, 1920, in Mt. Lake, Minnesota, to Peter M. and Susan (Neufeld) Franz. He was the oldest of five children. The family moved to a farm 30 miles north of Wolf Point, Minnesota, in 1926. His early education was in a rural one-room school and Wolf Point.

In 1937, after surviving the Dust Bowl and Great Depression, the family moved back to a farm in Mt. Lake, where he graduated from high school. His pre-med studies were at Augsburg College and the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. He graduated from the University of Minnesota Medical School in 1946.

In January 1943, he met nursing student Jean Lindahl. They were married August 29,

1943, and on August 29, 2013, they celebrated 70 years together.

Willis served in the U.S. Army as a medical student and medical officer from 1943 to 1949. His assignments as lieutenant and captain were at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas, and at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York, where as the only obstetrician he averaged a baby delivery a day, including the grandson of General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

After military service, he practiced medicine and surgery in Mt. Lake for one year.

In 1950, he joined Drs. Ed Guilfoyle and Virgil Thorpe in Newcastle. They established the Newcastle Clinic as a partnership, located at 227 S. Seneca Street. After a very busy general practice, including many surgeries and his estimated 3,000 babies delivered, he retired in 1986.

Willis was a member of the Wyoming Medical Society, American Medical Association, American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry, Lions Club, and First United Methodist Church. He served in numerous other organizations, including Wyoming Cancer Society, Wyoming Heart Association, school board, BREAD board, housing board, Izaak Walton League, hospital joint powers board, tree board and was a certified Master Gardener.

He was recognized as Newcastle High School Hall of Fame inductee, county fair parade marshal, most respected citizen, chamber citizen of the year, and father of the year. Willis and Jean participated together in many clubs and organizations, like Scouts, 4-H, county fair, church, and garden club. Their life revolved around their family, whom they loved dearly. Hunting, fishing, water and snow skiing, camping, rock collecting, gardening, bee keeping, and school activities were all part of their wonderful life. They traveled both nationally and internationally.

He was an organ donor, giving his skin to help others.

Survivors include son, David Bruce (Auroa), Newcastle; daughters, Barbara (Pat) Crow, Newcastle, Carol (Jeff) Gulbransen, Keystone, South Dakota, Nancy (Mike) McFarland, Newcastle; six grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. He is also survived by two brothers, Harlan and Larry, and numerous nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his wonderful wife, Jean (Dec. 14, 2013); his parents; his sister, Adeline Reimer; and brother, Robert.

Funeral services will be at First United Methodist Church at 10:00 a.m. on December 16, with Pastor Ron Sample officiating. His and Jean's cremains will be buried at Greenwood Cemetery at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorials are suggested to First United Methodist Church or Weston County Health Services Foundation, or a charity of donor's choice. Meridian Mortuary of Newcastle has been entrusted with arrangements.
