

## **Wertz, R. Dale**

Robert Dale Wertz, 62, of Bay Port, passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, November 3, 2005, following an apparent farming accident. He was born February 10, 1943 at home at 95 Risky Road in Bay Port, the fourth child of Joseph and Orpha (Stevanus) Wertz. He attended grade school at the Quarry School and then Michigan Mennonite School on Pigeon Road. He attended Eastern Mennonite High School in Harrisonburg, Virginia, for his junior and senior years, graduating in 1961. Dale and Floris Knechtel were married at the Evangelical United Brethren Church in Elkton on March 19, 1966. They lived in Pigeon until 1972, then moved to their present home at 95 N. Risky Road. The couple had three sons, Rodney Dale, Bryan Todd, and Kendall James. Rodney was killed in a tragic automobile accident on April 21, 1986 at age 17. Bryan and his wife, Angela, and daughter, Megan Elizabeth, live in Owosso, and Kendall and his son, Kendall James Jr. are from Goldsboro, North Carolina. Dale dearly loved his grandchildren because they were his pride and joy. In addition, Dale is survived by his sisters, Nova Jean (Durward "Butch") Miller, of Pigeon, and Ramona Mahler, of Elkhart, Indiana; two brothers, Willard (Ruby) Wertz and Donald Wertz, both of Goshen, Indiana; his mother-in-law, Adina Knechtel, of Elkton; many related nieces and nephews; hundreds of non-related nieces and nephews around the world who loved "Uncle Dale," and thousands of children throughout the county who knew him as Santa Claus. From a young child on, Dale worked on the 230-acre farm in Bay Port alongside his father. After graduation from high school, he returned home to continue farming with him. The two formed a partnership in 1967 and farmed together until Joe's death in March 1984. When still farming, Dale had often helped auctioneers at auction sales. In 1976, he formed Thumb Auction Service, later renamed Great Lakes Auction Company. He worked many estate, farm, school, and liquidation auctions throughout the years, but was especially known for the humor and excitement that he brought to the numerous benefit auctions he worked, always reminding bidders of the good cause, and witnessing to his faith. In November 1986, Dale ran for Huron County Commissioner, won his election, and took his first oath of office in January 1987. He has been re-elected every two years since, and presently was serving his 10th term. He served on the Michigan Association of Counties Board of Directors from 1993 to 2001, and also has served on the state and national transportation committees. He has also served on many other boards and committees including Blue Water Thumb Youth for Christ for 30 more than years, including several years as Chairman; Bay Shore Camp Board and Building & Grounds Committee; Huron Soil Conservation District Board; present Chairman of Human Development Commission for Huron, Sanilac, Tuscola and Lapeer counties; member of Huron County Health Board; and member of the multi-county Michigan Works Board. In 1997, Dale was instrumental in getting the Huron County Ice Arena started, because he has always loved and believed in young people and providing good constructive things for them to do. Dale also has served as emcee for many festivals and programs throughout Huron County, including the Pigeon Farmers' Festival for 20 years, the Sebewaing Sugar Festival, and the Bay Port Fish Sandwich Festival. Dale and Floris always had a love and appreciation for music, singing at various churches for special meetings at which Dale was also the song leader. Since 1976, Dale has directed the adult choir at Pigeon Salem United Methodist Church, where he was a member, and has also directed several community cantatas. He sang with the Pigeon Community Men's Chorus from its beginning until it disbanded. Dale has also served and chaired on several committees at Pigeon Salem United Methodist Church. His church and strong faith in God has been a source of comfort, encouragement, hope, strength, friendship and fellowship to his family. Dale was also a past president and very active member of the Pigeon Rotary Club, where he had perfect attendance since 1966, and firmly believed in the Rotary motto, "Service Above Self." Dale was a consummate giver, never for a price, but hoping for a smile. He gave, never expecting anything in return. The funeral service will be held at 11 a.m. on Monday, November 7, 2005, at Bay Shore Camp, 450 N. Miller Street in Sebewaing, with the Rev. Michael T. Sawicki, pastor of Pigeon Salem United Methodist Church, officiating. Burial will be in Grand Lawn Cemetery, south of Pigeon.

Visitation will be from 2 to 9 p.m. today at Pigeon Salem United Methodist Church, 23 Mabel Street in Pigeon. A scripture and praise service will be offered at 7 p.m. today at the church. Memorial contributions may be given to Salem United Methodist Church, Bluewater Thumb Youth for Christ, The Gideons, or Bay Shore Camp. Funeral arrangements are conducted by the Meyersieck-Bussema Funeral Home in Pigeon.