



## Emil T Smolek

July 26, 1919 - November 25, 2019

Emil T. Smolek, born 100 years ago, to Bessie and Ben Smolek on the edge of Blue Sea Community. He was preceded in death by his brother Ed and sisters Mildred and Blanche. He was an ornery and intelligent child. He climbed the windmill at age three. Convinced his brother to hunt bear (raccoon) with the handle of a broom, and even managed to blow up the outhouse all before the age of ten. He attended a one room schoolhouse at the edge of the property where he was hired as caretaker at age eight, stoking the fire in the morning before class. At age 10 Emil lost his father to a car accident. He graduated from North Judson High School by the age of sixteen and made his way to South Bend to help his mother at the deli and store where she baked pies. His boss liked him, moving him up the ladder, even introducing him to his daughter, but Emil had different ambitions.

Because of his mother's cunning the family was able to keep the Family Farm through the great depression. He borrowed a team of horses and a tractor from the neighbor and walked in the echo of his father's footsteps. Surely his father's too early departure drove him to both succeed and to keep alive Ben's memory. In that first year, he would work into the night to near exhaustion, curl up under the machinery, and get up the next morning to do it again. It was in those first few years that he met Lauraine Paulsen. They were married in spring of '44.

His childhood dream to be a pilot was realized during WW II. He was a proud Army Air Corp Captain and Pilot of a B-24 bomber. If you've been around him,

you know there are thousands of stories from these years. The proudest of these is that he didn't lose one crewman. After the war he returned to his farm and wife, putting away dreams of aeronautical engineering at her request. After the war he took an agricultural short course from Purdue Extension, and he never stopped reading and learning. His curiosity may be one of his greatest attributes. Civic pride was a hallmark of the Great Generation. He was no exception, being a lifelong member of Lions Club, a stalwart of the St. Luke UCC church, and pillar of the community. He and his wife Lauraine bore a son, Don, and later added two, Randy and Marianne, making their family complete. He started with 200 acres, raised hogs until they tore up Lauraine's lawn. He raised dairy cows for milk, and laying hens for eggs. The farm produced corn, soybeans, wheat, rye, oats, peppermint and spearmint. Emil would get up at 3:00 am to start the silage chopper harvesting peppermint in July with a number of Blue Sea neighbors and relatives that worked together to distill the crop. He was innovative in his farming, raising yields and buying land. He started one of the first controlled corn yield test plots in the 1950's that they still plant today. While milking the cows Emil used to tell stories to Don about Indians from the Blue Sea area that rivaled the Zane Gray novels. Each Christmas he took the family to Florida to see his mom, brother Ed, and sister Blanche.

Emil was instrumental in working with then State Senator Birch Bayh to annex part of Cass Twp. in Pulaski County into the San Pierre and North Judson School district. He gave his old farm house to a cousin and they moved it 5 miles to its current site. In its place, he personally built his new home in 1964, including design, laying cement block and brick, wiring, plumbing and carpentry, and later repeated the process for several others in the area. He welcomed Don and Randy into the Family Farm in the 70's. His wife of 40 years and many travel adventures died at the age of 59. He spent many years the bachelor, but was lucky in love again. He and Dorothy Gunlach were married for 23 years. He always would say, "The person you choose as a spouse is the most important decision you will ever make." Grandchildren and

Great Grandchildren inevitably came along. There is even a little Emil, "Heaven help us!" Until the very end, Emil oversaw the Smolek Farm's accounting, helping with management decisions. He was still running the combine during harvest at age 97. Randy, grandson Kevin and Kevin's wife Luella Smolek farm the approximately 1,500 acres today. Though there is much more than this, suffice it so say, his was a life full and truly well lived.

Visitation will be 4-7 PM CT Friday November 29, 2019 at the O'Donnell Funeral Home, Inc. and after 10 AM CT Saturday November 30, 2019 at the church. Funeral Services will be 11 AM CT Saturday November 30, 2019 at Saint Luke Community Church, San Pierre, Indiana. Burial will be in the San Pierre Cemetery.

# Cemetery Details

## San Pierre Cemetery

San Pierre, IN 46374

# Previous Events

## Visitation

NOV **29**. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

O'Donnell Funeral Home, Inc.  
302 Lane Street  
North Judson, IN 46366  
(574) 896-2149

## Visitation

NOV **30**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Saint Luke Community Church  
San Pierre, IN 46374

## Funeral Service

NOV **30**. 11:00 AM (CT)

Saint Luke Community Church  
San Pierre, IN 46374

# Tribute Wall

DL

“ We drove from Colorado to attend Emil's 100th birthday party in July. It was an awesome church service and wonderful party with so many friends & family. He was in great spirits and a delight to visit with. May he rest easy.

Donna Lucero - December 02, 2019 at 11:35 PM

RM

“ A salute to a good neighbor and a fine patriot!!! He left a fine legacy! The sons of Robert J. and Bozena Minarik : Bob Jr., Jim, Paul, Art and Steve!!

Robert L. Minarik - December 02, 2019 at 09:06 AM



“ My family was privileged to have lived near Emil and family. Talked with Emil a few years ago @bout his service to our country during WWII as well as his growing up in South Bend. I was so impressed by his stories and how many details he could give about that time in his life. So glad I had that chance to see history through his eyes. What a great man! Mary Ann Krzyzanowski

Mary Krzyzanowski - November 29, 2019 at 08:35 AM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Emil T Smolek.



November 27, 2019 at 05:55 PM