Ray and Helen Wolf reflect on the Zeeland Hall

By Zachary Vietz
Ray “Buster” and Helen (Nolz) Wolf have been in Zeeland their whole lives. Buster was the town’s mayor for 30 years, having retired in 2002. Buster formerly owned Wolf Oil, which was founded by his father, Ben Wolf, in 1939. Ben also served as mayor for many years.

The Wolves have made their lives here, and have children and grandchildren.

The Zeeland Hall was always the epicenter of activity. Buster and Helen talked about how nearly every school activity—all the plays, music recitals and graduations—were held there.

“The acoustics were good,” Buster said.

They were considered better than the school’s at the time.

The school carnival was held at the hall as well. The hall simply had all the room they needed at the time, which the old school was limited on. The Zeeland Hall seemed to be always the center of activity.

Before a majority of the events were held at the new school and gym, Hans J. Lee, Zeeland School’s music teacher, would put on plays and stage shows. Theatre was also another event on the long list of performances and activities held at the hall.

Another fond memory of the couple’s was the roller skating. They had different days for children, high school students and adults. People would come from neighboring towns to skate in Zeeland, and the skates (owned by Buster and several others) are still in the hall.

Buster and Helen could also not forget all the movies they’ve seen at the hall.

There used to be movies on both Saturday and Sunday. The projectors, just like the skates, can still be found at the hall.

The dances were also something the couple remember fondly. They held both pay dances and free dances. There was always music, and often dancing would go well after dark until about midnight.

Bands like the Bubbling Quintet, Iris Bosche’s 8-10 piece band and the Whoopee John Willfart’s Orchestra would play in Zeeland. The hall dances were a big deal, according to Buster and Helen. People from the surrounding communities would come out and dance the night away.

The summer months may have been some of the most exciting times for Zeeland and its hall. Buster and Helen remember all the weddings and receptions held in Zeeland. The ceremony took place at the old St. Andrew’s Catholic Church at 10 a.m., Oct. 21, 1961. After the ceremony, the newly married couple stayed for pictures while others left to eat at the hall, where they had their reception. From then on, dancing was the entertainment of the day and into the night. Roy Holzer played at their wedding.

As far as other church affairs are concerned, they thought the hall for its fall supper, and still continues to do so to this day. Buster and Helen also mentioned it was used for funeral lunches if the crowds were too large for the church.

As far as the hall goes today, Buster said that they do not celebrate the Fourth of July at the hall or in town any longer, but it was a huge annual event for many years. The last Fourth of July celebration was roughly 12 years ago.

As far as weddings go, Amanda Schumacher’s wedding was the last with a reception in the hall.

Buster believes that the town hall “will live on.” The younger generations will find their way back into Zeeland and to its hall. With the building being put on the National Register of Historic Places, the couple believes that it will increase interest for it being used for wedding receptions and the like.

The Schweigert Family congratulates the people of Zeeland on the naming of the Zeeland City Hall to The National Register of Historic Places.

May there be many more memories made in the decades to come!
Thanks to everyone who made possible the special designation for the Zeeland City Hall and for plans to preserve this historic building. The hall has been the site for so many of the events and activities, from wedding receptions to roller skating, that have made Zeeland a wonderful community. Support from present and past residents will allow the Zeeland City Hall to continue to be a focal point for the community for many years into the future.

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