Tony and Rose Holzer have been valentines for over 70 years

By Terri Lang

Tony and Rose knew each other well as they grew up in the same area, the St. Aloysius farm community near Hagoe. Their families attended the St. Aloysius Catholic Church so they share memories of their childhoods. That's how they got to know each other.

Tony Holzer and Rose Gefroh dated for three years before Tony proposed to Rose in 1948. He proposed to her on Valentine’s Day, and she said yes.

"I was going to find a job in Bismarck and move there," Rose said. "He asked me to marry him so I would stay."

It was her mother who encouraged her to find a job and earn their own money. Rose had a job lined up at St. Aloysius Hospital, but when Tony asked her to marry him, she accepted.

"At that time, I loved him so," Rose chuckled. "I suppose I thought he was handsome. He was kind, too, but things change!"

Her sense of humor may be one of the reasons Tony and Rose married on Nov. 9, 1948, at the St. Aloysius Catholic Church. They said their vows, had lunch and supper at the Strasburg Blue Room, and danced the night with family and neighbors.

The newlyweds moved in with Tony’s parents, Mike and Elizabeth Holzer, and lived with them for about two years on the farmstead. In 1952, Tony and Rose purchased the farm when his parents bought and moved to a farm near Linton.

Tony and Rose got up early on farms and both of their families were involved in dairy, beef cattle and small grains, and they also had many horses. Tony’s parents were Marius and Helen Gefroh. Tony and Rose both came from large families.

Tony grew up with four siblings (an additional 11 passed away in holocaust). Rose had five brothers and four sisters (four of her siblings passed away from the flu as babies).

Tony and Rose learned to work hard at a very young age and always looked after the farm. "Our parents taught us how to take care of ourselves and make our own living," Tony said.

Working hard then meant a lot of hard, physical labor.

Tony and Rose Holzer celebrated their 40th anniversary in 1988 at the Linton Community Center.

"The hardest was making up hay for the cattle and bulking rocks," he said. "And learning how to save enough money to pay the bills."

When asked what they liked most about life of farming,

"Combining," Tony said. "Sundays were dedicated to church, family and fellowship with neighbors — those being the qualities of a small community that the Holzers have appreciated over the years, especially in difficult times. It was in May of 1993, that they relied on their faith, family and friends.

"Loving our sons, Gerald, was the biggest hit in our lives," Rose said.

Gerald was only 32 years old when he lost his life in a tragic accident in 1994. Gerald was married to Connie (Horner) at the time of the accident, they had a daughter, Samantha (4) and Connie was pregnant with their son, Levi.

However, Tony and Rose agree that over the 70 years together, they have had more good times than bad. They were blessed to raise four children — Anthony, Gerald, Brenda and Geri. The Holzer family enjoyed short trips to Medora, the Peace Garden and Mt. Rushmore.

Tony Holzer (center) said his parents, Mike and Elizabeth, taught him about the importance of working hard, taking care of yourself and making your own living. This photo is from 1935-36.

Tony Holzer and Rose Gefroh said their vows on Nov. 9, 1948, at the St. Aloysius Catholic Church near Hagoe.

Holzer’s wedding party joined them in the celebration at the Strasburg Blue Room for lunch, dinner and a dance. Weddings back then were a whole day event. Front row, left to right, are, Rose (Gefroh) Schumacher, Helen (Schumacher) Weigel, Rose and Tony, and Eva (Holzer) Eberspecher, back row, back row, Leopold Holzer and Adam Gefroh.

Tony Holzer was a young age of 16 when he started dating his sweetheart, Rose Gefroh.

Rose Gefroh was 19 years old when she dated Tony Holzer for the first time. Dates were usually going to movies and barn dances, and celebrating neighbors’ name days.

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Tony and Rose grew up on farms. This photo was from the early 1940s on the Mike and Elizabeth Holzer farmstead during threshing season.

In December of 2016, Rose Holzer celebrated her 90th birthday. With Rose and Tony (front) are their adult children, left to right, Anthony (aka Tony), Geraldine Goldade and Bernadette (aka Bernie) Hendrickson Purser.

Tony and Rose lived with Tony's parents, Mike and Elizabeth Holzer, in this home on the farmstead for their first two years of marriage.

Tony and Rose grew up on farms. This photo was from the early 1940s on the Mike and Elizabeth Holzer farmstead during threshing season.

In December of 2016, Rose Holzer celebrated her 90th birthday. With Rose and Tony (front) are their adult children, left to right, Anthony (aka Tony), Geraldine Goldade and Bernadette (aka Bernie) Hendrickson Purser.

Several of Tony and Rose Holzer's extended family gathered at the Linton Senior Center for Grandma Rose's 90th birthday. Tony and Rose have 12 grandchildren (grandson Brian Holzer passed away in November of 2010) and 30 great-grandchildren.
Tony Holzer was the third generation on the Holzer family farmstead. It was homesteaded in 1902 by Tony’s grandparents, Anton and Margaret Mastel. In 1925, Mike and Elizabeth Holzer (Tony’s parents) became the second generation on the homestead, and in 1948, Tony and Rose moved to the farm and lived there until 1978. Tony and Rose’s son, Gerard (deceased at age 32) was the fourth generation. Holzer’s grandson, Tony Goldade (Mike Jr. and Geraldine Holzer Goldade’s son), is the fifth generation on the homestead. (Mike and Geraldine Goldade rented the farmstead for 10 years from 1977 to 1987).

Tony and Rose Holzer became snowbirds in the mid-1990s and spent eight winters in Arizona.

With Rose and Tony (front) on her 90th birthday are, back row, left to right, Anthony (son) and his wife, Elsie Holzer, Bernie Hendrickson Purser (daughter), Connie (deceased son Gerard’s wife) (Holzer) Gaebe and Michael and Geraldine (daughter) Goldade.