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"It Isn't Home Without The Homestead"

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WWII Veteran Turns 100

By Jessica Wald

This Thursday, November 7, marks one century since November 7, 1924, when Napoleon resident and WWII Veteran

John Gross was born to John M. & Magdalena Gross. John is the second of 16 children, of which three passed away in infancy and nine are still living

today. John is a resident at the Wentz Living Center in Napoleon.

Longevity seems to run in the family, as John's mother lived

to be 101 and one half and his older brother, Math, recently turned 101. "There really is no secret," John chimed in. As he thought back to his younger

days, he said, "It's different; it was a whole different life then how we grew up."

John's oldest daughter, Rosalie Long of Gackle, says she would describe her dad to be

a quiet, understanding guy, who doesn't get too excited. "He's always liked horses, cattle, checkers and singing," she said as he played the piano, organ or Omnichord by ear and also sang German songs and taught German singing through the

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Army Soldier **John Gross** in June 1945 at Fort Hood, TX.



John and the late **Margaret Gross** in 2017 when they celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary.



John Gross listens to his daughter, **Rosalie Long**, read a 100th birthday card to him last week at the Wentz Living Center.

Wentz Living Center Receives AHCA's Bronze Award

The American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living (AHCA/NCAL) recently an-



WLC administrator, **Rick Regner** holding the 2024 Bronze - Commitment to Quality Award.

nounced the names of the 2024 Bronze - Commitment to Quality Award recipients. This year, 525 skilled nursing facilities (SNFs), 135 assisted living (AL) communities, and 49 combined SNF/AL providers in 48 states earned the Bronze Award, the first of three distinctions possible through the AHCA/NCAL National Quality Award Program. The Program recognizes organizations that meet progressively rigorous standards of performance to improve the lives of residents and staff in long term and post-acute care.

Of the 525 skilled nursing facilities nationwide receiving the Bronze Award, Wentz Living Center in Napoleon was one of the recipients.

"The recognition of these facilities is a testament to their commitment to

**Bronze Award
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Napoleon FFA Ag Communications team, left to right: **Mr. Brian Schneider**, **Sabrina Haas**, **Anna Bitz**, **Eva Weigel**, and **Alyssa Young**.

FFA Members Earn Gold Award In National Agricultural Communications CDE

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Gross Turns 100

Continued From Front

Council of Arts.

Long said her dad is one of 10 boys and three girls in his family, and shared a few stories of his younger years that he has told her through the years. She also noted her dad doesn't have a middle name, but he goes by John J., because in those days, they used the first letter of their

a certain way, then they rode a train to Chicago to sell the turkeys.

The family grew up milking cows and always helping on the family farm. "We were glad to [be able to] have cows to milk," commented John.

John's wife, Margaret Schaffer, grew up just several miles away from the Gross family farm. Margaret was the oldest



The late Margaret (Schaffer) & John J. Gross in 1944, when the couple had been dating.



The late Margaret & John J. Gross on their wedding day, February 3, 1947.

father's name, as their middle initial.

One story Long remembers her dad sharing, was how John was showing some kids how to tease a bull with a red hankie and as the bull was doing nothing, he turned and walked away. The bull ended up coming up after him, and hit him and John ended up on top of the bull. She said somehow, he didn't get hurt; "maybe his pride a little," she said with a chuckle.

Long also said her dad told her a time when a lot of the boys were home while his parents went to town. Boys were being boys, she noted, and all the dishes in the house broke so when their parents returned from town, they headed right back in and had to buy dishes to serve supper that evening.

She also said John and his siblings grew up with very little during the depression years, but didn't know any different. "They would catch skunks and squirrels to sell the fur and tails for spending money in the 30's." Long also said they raised turkeys for Thanksgiving, where they would have to butcher and hang the turkeys on a hanger



In years past, John J. Gross enjoyed taking his grandchildren for buggy rides around the farm.

of three children and her father, Jacob, passed away when she was in her young teens. Her mother, Rosalia, would hire young men in the neighborhood to help with the farming. John, who was then 17, was one of the men to help with threshing. Although this is when they first noticed each other, they also were in youth activities together at their church parish and went to the same school.

For the next couple years, the duo hung out at wedding dances and visited each other more often. In 1944 John was drafted to be in the Army during WWII. The couple then got engaged and wanted to be married before he was deployed. But Margaret's mother said she was not to get married until she was 19, so Margaret waited and prayed every day while John was away.

John served in the Army in Hawaii and then the Philippines. While on the ship he made several lifelong friends.

After about a year and one half, John was released from the Army and the couple was married on February 3, 1947. John and Margaret were married for 72 years, before Margaret passed away December 12, 2019, when she was 91 years old.



John J. and the late Margaret Gross enjoyed performing German music together.



The John M. & Magdalena Gross family around 1940. Front (l-r): Pius, Isadore, the late John M., the late Magdalena, Leo and the late Richard; back: Math, the late Elizabeth (Schatz), John J., the late Clara (Braun), the late Andrew, Ann (Dammel), Benedict, Brother Placid and Valentine.

Rosalie said her parents told stories of how their wedding day was the coldest day of winter, no snow but very windy and temps below zero. Back then weddings took place on Mondays, as a whole day event. There was no going to the beauty shop to get hair and nails done, but instead, Margaret had to milk cows. After chores, came the ceremony, which was held before noon at the former St. Anthony's Catholic Church, about 15 miles southwest of Napoleon. A double wedding took place with the late Leo and Anna Mary Ibach. After the marriages a separate reception was held for each couple at the brides' home. After dinner there was a dance in the kitchen until supper was served. After another round of chores, a formal wedding dance was held at the old fire hall. It was noted there was also no honeymoon, as the cows had to be milked.

Grosses lived on her mom's farm for two years, then they rented a farm north of Napoleon from John's dad for six-and one-half years. Then, in 1955, they found a farm south of Tappen to buy and call their own; raising cattle, milked cows and farmed, until they moved to Napoleon in 1989.

John and the late Margaret have five children, in order of age: Rosalie Long (Gackle), the late Magdalena "Maggie" Johnson, Rodney Gross (Jamestown), the late John "Johnny" G. Gross and Bonita Hughes (Colorado). The couple also have ten grandchildren and 17 great grandchildren.

Both John and Margaret went to a country school near the St. Anthony area, southwest of Napoleon. Neither graduated from high school, as they had to help on the farm. Rosalie said while her parents were in their 50's, they both went back to school and earned their GED's.

Grosses enjoyed playing

The Gross family in 1971; front (l-r): Bonita, John J., the late Margaret and the late Johnny Jr.; back: the late Maggie, Rosalie and Rodney.



The Gross family in 2017 on their parents' 70th anniversary celebration. Front: John J. & the late Margaret Gross; back: John and Rosalie Long (Gackle), the late Magdalena "Maggie" Johnson, Rodney and Virginia Gross (Jamestown), Bonita Hughes (Colorado), the late John "Johnny" G. & the late Yvonne Gross.

cards, visiting neighbors and traveling. They visited every state in the U.S. except Alaska, along with international trips, including Germany, Italy and Japan. Many trips included visiting relatives and John's Army buddies.

Rosalie said in 1983 John went to Japan on a Friendship Force Exchange trip. In return, the couple hosted several foreign exchange students from Japan. In 1987 John wanted to return to Japan, but with Margaret this time. She said the only way she would go is if they went to Hawaii first.

For their 40th anniversary, the couple went to Hawaii and John showed his wife where he was stationed on the island while in the Army. When they arrived at Schofield Army Base on Oahu, John told security he wanted to show his wife where he was during part of WWII. He rattled off the dates, his birthdate and military number and within minutes a Jeep was at the entrance

to get them. They were shown around the barracks and they could still see the bullet holes in the building.

After visiting Hawaii, they went to Japan and were able to visit some of their exchange students while there.

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This Thursday, November 7, just four days shy of Veteran's Day, John will be 36,525 days old; 100 years. While he thought back, he said "sometimes could have been better. Doesn't matter how old you get; you're not old enough to know about all things," he said.

Family and friends gathered last Saturday, November 2, at the Wentz Living Center for an early celebration for John's 100th birthday with him. Rosalie said some of John's Army friends' children even made the trip to celebrate.