

# A lifetime of smiles in Eagle

Harold Chapman,  
89, remembers

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**Eagle** — When Harold Chapman smiles, his face lights up like the smiling face on the yellow water tower visible from his home here.

He has reason to smile. At age 89, he has an energy and determination that would rival many a younger person. Like the bald eagle that early settlers named the area after, Chapman is a symbol of independence.

He also is a symbol of what life used to be like in Eagle, before the trains left and the cars arrived, before modern life took the fast lane around this small village.

In this quiet rural village where he lives alone, Chapman enjoys a feeling of safety in the knowledge that friends and relatives are looking out for his well-being. He receives one meal a day from the Meals on Wheels program.

Other than a hearing impairment, he is in good physical condition. He moves quickly, although his walk is somewhat stiff because of his age and a broken hip suffered a few years ago.

His wife of 70 years, Ruby, has been in a nursing home for the past five years with Alzheimer's disease.

He took care of her for about three years at the onset of the illness. During her last eight months at home she needed constant attention.

His house is immaculate. He spends much of his time cleaning and taking care of his lawn.

His living room, where he reads the newspaper daily and watches television, is filled with black walnut antiques that bring back special memories. Much of the furniture was saved from friends who would have discarded the pieces.

Chapman does get lonely. Although Eagle is still a small community, people don't know each other as well as in his youth, he said. Many of the people he knew have died.

But he has his brother Archie, 85, and his two sisters, Eliza Meredith, 95, and Catherine Ruby, 70. The family had nine children.

The wealth of Chapman's memory is impressive. Like the water tower near his home, he is a monument to the days when Eagle first made its mark on the map.

The tower marks the spot where Eagle had a shining moment in 1876 when a rough 16-carat diamond, perhaps deposited by a glacier, was dis-

About that time, Eagle was the third largest commercial center in Waukesha county and a fashionable resort. Elaborate hotels were built around the area's natural springs. The village had been platted with the coming of the Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad in 1851.

In the days of Chapman's

Eagle was a commercial center with trains passing through about six times a day. The community had its own telephone company, sewing factory, feed mills, pickle business, movie theater and small hospital. There was a jail, which on the rare occasions that it was used housed vagrants who had traveled on the trains.

In 1920, Chapman, then 23, bought a local garage called the Smart Bros. Garage, where he had been working as a bookkeeper. He turned it into a Standard Oil station called H.G. Chapman and operated it with his brother Archie.

The remnant of that original one-room station, Chapman Oil, now is operated by Archie's son and two grandsons. Archie still works part-time at the station, which now has a convenience store to help keep it in business.

Harold Chapman said it was the popularity of automobiles, which brought him into business, that also

took many of the other businesses away from Eagle. The small town couldn't compete with sales in Waukesha and Milwaukee, he said.

Chapman remembered the days when gasoline sold for 15 cents a gallon and the station kept a 1-cent commission on each gallon. Harold and his brother used to load gasoline, fuel oil and motor oil with 5-gallon buckets into 50-gallon tanks on their Model T Ford truck to make deliveries to area farms and homes.

Having been raised in a poor farm family in the area and living through the depression, Chapman liked to save his money. But about \$125,000 in family savings have been eaten up by Ruby's medical and nursing home expenses, Chapman said.

It was a difficult choice to put Ruby, now 86, in the Virginia Health Care Center in Waukesha, and Chapman took his time making that decision.

Four times a week Chapman drives his car to visit his daughter, Ann Trupke of Waukesha, before going to see his wife. He also has two daughters, who live in Arizona and New York.

His days are filled with thoughts of his wife.

He remembers that when his wife lived at home, the couple used to go for a drive in the country every night. Ruby didn't attend high school, Chapman said, but she was a talented painter, sewer and pianist, as well as a good cook.

Chapman said he thought Ruby still remembered him, although the doctor told him otherwise.

"She stays awake all the time I'm there, and she acts like she knows who I am," he said. "If I can help her, I want to do that."

"It makes me feel good that I don't think she could have any better place."

He enjoys visiting her but said that "if she got really sick or if she didn't know anything, I would want her to die. I wouldn't want her to live and suffer."

His daughter Ann said: "You can see there is a love there. He talks to her but she doesn't understand that, of course."

"It gives him a purpose to see her."