



Gene Daubendiek

January 20, 2013

Funeral services for Gene Daubendiek, 89, of Jefferson, will be 10:00 a.m. Thursday January 24, 2013 at Trinity Lutheran Church, Jefferson. Family visitation will be on Wednesday January 23, 2013 from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m. at Slininger-Rossow Funeral Home in Jefferson. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Greene County Medical Center Foundation or the Jefferson Elks Lodge and sent to Slininger-Rossow Funeral Home, PO Box 108, Jefferson, Iowa 50129. 515-386-2171. Online Condolences can be made at www.sliningerrossowfuneralhome.com

Gene is survived by his sister Ruth Harvey and his brother Joe; his son, Jim (Jeanne); his daughter, Sarah (Jim) Blackmon; grandchildren Jody (Paul) Schulte; Jenny Daubendiek (fiancé Dennis Robinson); Jamie Daubendiek (Cindi); Laurel, Emily, Austin and Preston Blackmon, and his great-grandchildren Ellie and Molly Schulte and Jameson Daubendiek. He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife of 67 years, Mary; his brothers Bill and Bob and his sister Bertha, his daughter Mary Jeannette, and his grandson Grant Jameson Blackmon.

Gene Daubendiek passed away on Sunday January 20, 2013 in Jefferson, IA at the age of 89 years. He was the son of Carl Henry and Bertha (Krecji) Daubendiek, born on March 12, 1923, south of Cylinder, Iowa. Gene's grandparents emigrated from Germany to settle in northern Iowa and he was proud of his German heritage. He followed in the footsteps of his grandfather who started in the infancy of the telephone business in 1893. Growing up, Gene's family moved from town to town modernizing telephone exchanges. His German heritage instilled in him a very strong work ethic. Gene started his telephone career at an

early age of 10 when he headed a crew of men trimming trees along the telephone lines. Throughout his school years he worked after school, summers, and on the weekends for the telephone company.

In the spring of 1939 his family moved to Jefferson, Iowa and he graduated from high school with the class of 1940. He enjoyed helping organize his class reunions through the years. Gene attended Iowa State where he met his future wife Mary Phillips, from Varna, Illinois. They married on February 18, 1945, and moved to Jefferson where they raised their family and lived for 67 years. After graduating with an electrical engineering degree from Iowa State he left that day to go to Osceola, Iowa, to become the general manager of that company. They had been hit by a sleet storm and all of their lines were lying on the ground. That company was sold a year later and he returned to Jefferson where he worked as an engineer at the Jefferson Telephone Company and other exchanges where the family held interest in Iowa and Nebraska.

Gene, his brother, and father formed a company in 1950 to help other independent telephone companies become established and over the following 16 years worked for over 200 companies. In 1962, Gene's father passed away, and Gene started full-time as General Manager of the Jefferson Telephone Company. He was the General Manager for 23 years and was passionate about the success of the telephone industry, as well as his community. He retired from active service in 1988 but continued as a director and later director emeritus for a total of 74 years with the company.

The Jefferson Telephone Company was one of the early telephone companies to convert to direct distance dialing in 1965 and to digital switching equipment in 1982. The digital switch allowed Jefferson Telephone Company to be among the first 10 percent of telephone companies in the United States to convert to a digital switching system. Gene thought contrary to the popular belief that "if it isn't broken, don't fix it". He believed that the telephone industry must always stay at least one step ahead of the need for change, and strived to anticipate those needed steps.

Gene helped design the first “decimonic ringing machine” as a device that permitted party line subscribers to hear only their own ring instead of everyone’s ring on the party line. After a positive vote of the subscribers he designed and built a conversion timer that sent a warning signal after the parties had talked for six minutes. In an era when private lines were not an option, this automatic timer was the first in use in the United States and limited the amount of time they could talk. In Jefferson, the company also had the first highway mobile telephone system in Iowa.

Gene was devoted to preserving the history of the telephone business through serving as curator for one of the first museums in the United States dedicated to the independent telephone industry housed in the Jefferson office. Gene remained zealous about sustaining the rich history of the telephone business for future generations.

He served as President of the Iowa Telephone Association and a Director of USITA (United States Independent Telephone Association) representing all independent telephone companies of the United States. In 1972 he received a life membership in the Independent Telephone Pioneers Association for having served over 40 years in the telephone industry. Gene was an early member of OPASTCO (Organization for the Protection and Advancement of Small Telephone Companies), and rose to be on the Board of Directors for many years. Gene served as the President of OPASTCO in 1970 and 1971 and was the only person to serve as president for more than one year. In January of 2013, he received the Chairman’s Award for OPASTCO.

Community involvement was very important to Gene as he served in leadership for many organizations in Jefferson including the city council, Elks Lodge, Lions Club, Greene County Golf and Country Club, Jaycees (receiving the “Boss of the Year” award in 1983), the Jefferson Airport Commission, the Industrial Bureau of the Chamber of Commerce, the Jefferson Industrial Development Company, and served on the boards of various other businesses.

Gene loved fishing, hunting, playing cards, and going out on his boat in Canada, Iowa,

and Florida. He was known for teaching all the kids and grandkids in the family to water-ski. For years he could be found on Wednesdays and Saturdays playing cards with friends. The family joked that if he did well playing cards, they got to go out for dinner that night.

Mary and Gene enjoyed entertaining and often had people over to their home which they built in 1951 and where they lived for over 55 years together. They enjoyed wintering in Ft. Myers Beach, Florida, for 25 years until they retired permanently in Jefferson in 2003 due to Gene's health. They also loved being involved with their children and grandchildren, attending many sporting, musical, and educational events through the years.

Generous is a word that defines Gene and he modeled that spirit to his family. He was often treating people to boat rides or fishing trips, taking them out for dinner, bringing fish back from Canada or Alaska to share with friends and family. He could be counted on to organize any activity or function with precision.