

Owen John Solomonson

Owen J. Solomonson, resident of Northwood, died on Monday, November 8, 2021, at the Lutheran Retirement Home. Born on March 28, 1937, to John I. Solomonson and Opal A. (Willand) Solomonson, he grew up on the family farm near Scarville, and was baptized and confirmed at North Prairie Lutheran Church. He graduated from Scarville High School in 1955, and attended Waldorf College (Class of 1959). For several years thereafter, he lived at home and worked on the farm.

In 1979, Owen moved to Ames, where he joined the maintenance staff at the Iowa Department of Transportation. When he retired from I-DOT in 1999, he moved to Lake Mills, where he assisted his parents in their final years.

Owen's years at Waldorf College left an indelible mark on him. Many of his friends from his Waldorf days became lifelong friends, and he corresponded regularly with a number of them. As a faithful alumnus, he stayed close to his *alma mater*, visiting often to offer a friendly hello to staff, and to attend numerous events, including alumni gatherings, concerts, award ceremonies, homecoming events, Christmas programs, and commencements. In his home community or wherever he encountered a prospective college student, he would readily extol the value of a Waldorf education.

In 2011, he became a member of the Waldorf Endowment Society. His consistent giving over the years reflected his love for the college, and when he was able to do so financially, he eventually established two scholarships for Waldorf students—the Carol Solomonson Palm Memorial Scholarship, and the John and Opal Solomonson Memorial Scholarship. It was gratifying for him to participate in helping a number of students obtain a college education in this way.

Perhaps one of the proudest moments in Owen's life was in Fall 2015 when he showed up for the annual awards banquet at Waldorf, and to his surprise, he was called forward to accept a plaque for the college's first-ever Waldorf Encouragement Award for his "extraordinary support and love for Waldorf College." For Owen, there was great joy in giving—whether a financial gift, a CD that he thought someone would enjoy, a book worth reading, or a simple word of encouragement.

One of Owen's favorite pastimes dating back to his childhood was word play, and he needed no convincing when someone proposed a good game of Anagrams—which later led to Skip-Across, then to Boggle and Scrabble. He would often come up with rarified words, and was delighted if they also happened to be big counters. His memory was remarkable, and when anyone had trouble recalling details of an event long ago, they knew they could turn to Owen, especially if the details involved particular features on any car involved in the story.

In his later years, some of his favorite reading was found in his second set of encyclopedias. (His first set went to the local library.) He read extensively about cars, and also about the U.S. presidents and other notable leaders. His love for cars traced back to childhood, and to the time that he and his father took apart a Ford, just as a learning experience.

In Fall of 2017, Owen moved from his house in Lake Mills to the Lutheran Retirement Home in Northwood, where he experienced the warmth of a retirement community, developed new friendships, and received excellent care from a wonderful, loving staff, especially when memory became an issue.

Owen was preceded in death by his parents. Survivors include two sisters: Sonia Solomonson and her fiancé John Schlomann, and Cheryl Crockett and her husband Larry; as well as five nephews and a niece: Randy Nelsen, his wife Melinda, and their daughter Savannah; Peter Groenewold, his wife Sandi, and their daughter Olivia; Joel Groenewold, his wife Susie, and their children Spencer, Noah, Gretchen, Maggie, Elizabeth, and Douglas; Aaron Groenewold, his wife Kara Kelly, and Aaron's children Payton and Ayden; Kelsey Crockett, his wife Stacey, and their son Mason; and Carmen Crockett.

A memorial service celebrating Owen's life, postponed for months due to COVID concerns, was held on August 19, 2022, after his cremains had been scattered on the Waldorf campus, at the family farm near Scarville, and in the North Prairie Lutheran Church Cemetery.