

Arnold Cmejla

September 26, 1932 – September 21, 2023

ALGOMA – **Arnold “Arnie” Cmejla**, as fine of an example of a sweet old man as you could ever meet, passed away at Bellin Hospital in Green Bay after a brief illness on September 21, 2023, just five days short of his 91st birthday.

Born September 26, 1932, Arnie was the only child of Art and Alvina Cmejla and spent most of his life operating the multi-generational family dairy farm near Alaska in Kewaunee County with his wife, Pearl (Lawrenz).

Arnie was in his element behind the wheel, whether it was on a tractor in his own fields or one of his neighbors, or in his “retirement” mowing the grass at Cedar Valley Campground or driving for Luxury Limousines. He and Pearl enjoyed traveling and meeting people, including a memorable trip to his family’s Bohemian homeland in what was at the time Czechoslovakia. They were regulars on Babler Bus trips to casinos around the region, where they played penny slots and limited their spending to whatever was in their separate gambling account.

Arnie attended the old Alaska School through eighth grade before his mother deemed it necessary for him to work full-time with his father on the farm. Despite his limited formal education, Arnie went on to earn securities and insurance licenses later in life, and he was extremely well-read when it came to current events. His memory remained sharp even as his body gradually failed from the effects of a lifetime of hard work.

He learned to play the accordion as a teenager, taking lessons from Mrs. Vander Kinder, whom he saw play at his cousin Leonard’s wedding. Art drove Arnie to Green Bay for those lessons in the family’s new 1938 Chevrolet, for which he had paid \$870. Arnie later formed Arnie’s Country Boys, a six-man band that played weddings and showers for about six years until the local musicians union took them down for not charging enough.

In June of 1956, Arnie and a few of his buddies found themselves at a local establishment called The Triangle. Arnie got up the courage to ask a Milwaukee high school girl who was visiting family in the area (Pearl) if she would like to dance. The two hit it off and stayed in touch via the mail, usually sending each other three letters per week. Their first “official” date took place at the show house in Kewaunee, where they saw the movie Ma and Pa Kettle – twice.

Arnie was smitten, and that October he drove to Milwaukee to meet Pearl’s parents and ask their permission to propose to their 17-year-old daughter. He gave Pearl an engagement ring for Christmas and they were married the following August 24, 1957, after she graduated and turned 18, and a little over a year after their first dance.

The military draft was in full swing, which wasn’t a big deal to Arnie since he had consistently failed his draft physical due to a knee issue. It suddenly became a very big deal two weeks before the wedding when he unexpectedly passed his physical. This sent panic through the couple, especially Pearl as she faced the prospect of living with her new husband’s parents on a farm she knew nothing about. The newlyweds had six months to get pregnant in order for him to earn a farm deferral. They made it by a month.

Arnie and Pearl lived with Art and Alvina for three months before deciding to build their own home. They took down two log houses over the course of the next decade, removed the nails and created the boards needed for their new house.

The couple took over operation of the 150-acre farm shortly after their wedding and eventually added another 80 acres, along the way being named Kewaunee County’s Farmers of the County in 1978 and more recently the oldest farmer in the town of Pierce. Their Lake Breeze Dairy Farms started with 17 cows and ended with 80 in 1995 when



stray voltage from WPS power lines became so severe that 18 of their best cows had to be destroyed. WPS never acknowledged its role in the problem.

Arnie and Pearl shared 66 years together, working the farm as a team and raising three children. In addition to Pearl, Arnie's survivors include daughter Bonnie Groessl (Mike Dauplaise), Green Bay; and sons Gary (Natalie) Cmejla, Potomac, Montana; and Jeff (Kim) Cmejla, Alaska, Wis.

Also surviving are Pearl's brother, Roy (Kathy) Lawrenz, and their children Eve (Warren) Wallace and Jon (special friend Amanda); grandchildren Ben (Emmy) Groessl and their children Jack and Lola, and Nick (Megan Johnson) Groessl; step-grandchildren Steven Bohmann (special friend Corrie Wood); Brittany (Pete) George and their children Caitlin, Brooke, Layken, DJ, Vivian; Bryar Bennett; Tristan Robertson Weina and her daughter Emery; and Bryli Weina.

The Cmejla family would like to thank the dedicated team at Waterfall Health in Algoma as well as the doctors and nurses of Bellin Health for their compassionate care during Arnie's end-of-life journey. Thank you also to the many friends and family members who assisted Arnie and Pearl along the way.

The family will greet friends at St. John's Lutheran Church in Rankin from 9-11 a.m. on Arnie's birthday, Tuesday, September 26, with funeral services at 11 led by Dr. Rev. Christopher Jackson. Kinnard Funeral and Cremation Services is assisting with arrangements. Online condolence messages may be shared at KinnardFCS.com.

