

DONOR STORIES

LEWIS AND PHYLLIS ZAGER “Lewis and Phyllis Zager Family Fund”

Lewis and Phyllis Zager had a very simple way of looking at life, they simply let their lives unfold as fate would have it. Phyllis A. Romick was born November 16, 1926 in Buckingham, Iowa, the second youngest of four children. Phyllis’s father was in the service, as a result the family made several moves in a rather short period of time. When Phyllis was 15 her family moved to Traer and later moved to Kansas for her senior year of high school. After her graduation from Liberty Memorial High School her family made Traer their home for the second time. Like many women of her time Phyllis decided to attend nursing school after graduation. She chose to receive her training from the University of Iowa.

Phyllis is a strong believer in letting things come as they may and simply “letting your life unfold.”

Lewis “Lew” grew up in Iowa City, graduated from Iowa City High School and then the University of Iowa College of Medicine. He practiced in Oskaloosa, Iowa, followed by a brief time in Burlington, Iowa. He was called into the Army during World War II, serving in the European Theatre under General Patton. After the war he returned to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics where he completed a residency in General Surgery. Phyllis was in nurses training there, and the hospital is where she and Lew met. They were married one year later with Lew going on to complete his residency and Phyllis becoming a homemaker.

Upon completion of Lew’s residency, the couple moved to Waterloo with their two sons, Gene (who now lives in Davenport) and Randall (now residing in Idaho). A third son, Bruce, was born in Waterloo and continues to live here.

In late 1950, Lew became an associate in the Practice of General Surgery with Dr. Clark Cooper and Dr. C.J. Mikelson. That group was later named Surgical and Orthopedic Associates and is now a part of the Cedar Valley Medical Associates.

Phyllis was pleased to move to Waterloo as she grew up in Buckingham and Traer. It gave the grandparents an opportunity to build close relationships with the three grandsons. There are now eight grandchildren, five step-grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

After living on Maryland Avenue, Lew and Phyllis built their present home at 121 Kenway, then surrounded by open fields with birds and wildlife. Watching the area develop commercially was interesting, bringing a new dimension to life around them.

Family vacations were always a time of renewal and adventure for the Zagers. Time was spent on Minnesota lakes, camping in the Black Hills and the Tetons (where they experienced the earthquake of 1959), California



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and Arizona trips and many day outings with picnics and just enjoying the outdoors. Lew experienced his own adventures in his teenage years. One summer he and a friend lived the life of a hobo, traveling by hopping freight trains to Colorado and western states.

Lew and Phyllis enjoyed close friendships with many of the area doctors and their wives. Referrals came to Lew from doctors in surrounding towns, where he often traveled to perform surgical procedures. Winter vacations, golf, bridge and dinners made for wonderful times to share.

Throughout her years in Waterloo Phyllis became extremely involved in the community. She found herself very involved with the Central Christian Church including women's fellowship, choir, teaching Sunday School and serving as a Deacon and Elder. Phyllis was also involved in PEO, an organization that encourages education among women and served as the chapter president. She also served as the Medical Auxiliary President. Phyllis enjoys attending performances of the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestra as well as shows at the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center at the University of Northern Iowa. She also spends time visiting the Waterloo Center for the Arts.

Her gentle smile impacted many organizations but Phyllis is most proud of the work done by serving on the task force to start an adult daycare called Newel Post (now under the umbrella of Adults Incorporated). The purpose of this daycare was to give families help in caring for adults with special needs. Newel Post was the first adult daycare in the state of Iowa and started a movement to provide this type of care all over the state. Because of Phyllis' compassion and attention to detail she was asked to help with the fundraising for the Family Service Leagues women's shelter. She was successful in helping to provide more adequate facilities for women in need.

Lew Zager passed away on January 3, 1989.

Lew and Phyllis made a home in Waterloo for 53 years. They felt it was a safe, quiet, good community to raise their children. Phyllis's decision to start a fund with the Community Foundation was a way of thinking of the community and meeting its needs as it had met the needs of her family. Phyllis is a strong believer in letting things come as they may and simply "letting your life unfold." Her donation will help to make the lives of others unfold with ease.

*Historical vignette prepared by the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa.