

Robert Lee (“Bob”) Olson, Sr. of Tekamah, NE and proprietor of Lee Valley was born February 1, 1930, in the Argo area of rural Craig, Nebraska to Arthur A. Olson and Florence J. (Lundholm) Olson. He passed away on June 14, 2017, surrounded by his wife and children.

He was baptized and confirmed at Swaburg Lutheran Church in rural Uehling, Nebraska. Bob attended Argo rural school and graduated from Uehling High School in 1947.

Bob started farming and raising livestock in high school. In his early years, he helped build Boys Town and also worked at the Mead Ordinance Plant and Uehling Hay Mill. He took over the care of the farm and of his family upon the untimely death of his father when Bob was just 19.

Bob married Phyllis June Oberst on April 13, 1952, and for 65 years they remained by each other’s side. They raised five children: Robert Lee, Jr., Randy Lee, Vickie Lee, Scott Lee and Kristie Lee. The family initially resided in the Argo area, then rented a farm on the Missouri River bottom near Tekamah beginning in 1955.

Bob started buying and selling farm equipment in the early 1960s. Bob, Jr. came up with the name for the business – “Lee Valley” – because of their middle names and the location of the farm in the Missouri River valley.

In the 1980s, Bob and Phyllis expanded Lee Valley to include farm machinery consignment auctions, later holding some of the largest consignment auctions in the region and becoming one the largest farm operations in Burt County. Randy, Patty, Scott and Susan joined them in the business full time. Many family members worked together to make each sale day a success.

Bob was a 4-H leader for many years and enjoyed watching his children and grandchildren show animals and other 4-H projects. He loved the Burt County Fair and the 4-H programs and was a supporter for over 50 years. He was also a member of Tekamah Masonic Lodge No. 31, receiving his 50-year pin in 2014 and a member of Tangier Shrine and Rawhide Nobles, participating in many, many parades in his little car.

Bob participated in the local tractor ride, which later became the Great Nebraska Tractor Ride, from day one. In 2012, he led the tractor ride, which began at Lee Valley as part of their 50-year anniversary customer appreciation celebration.

Bob was proud of his Swedish heritage and instilled those traditions in his family, including a Swedish prayer recited to this day by all generations of his family. Swedish foods, including lutefisk, Bob’s famous homemade eggnog, and rice pudding, were always a part of his Christmas traditions. Bob’s love of family was truly the pride of his life. He also cherished a multitude of faithful friends and employees over the course of his lifetime.

Bob and Phyllis spent many wedding anniversaries together in Branson, Missouri, taking in as many country-music shows as they possibly could.

Bob was an innovator and visionary in farming practices and encouraged that in others. He was one of the first to plant corn in 30-inch rows, use top planting practices, plant narrow row beans, use a grain cart, and use a 4-wheel drive tractor.

He loved telling stories with customers and friends over a cup of coffee and homemade treats by Phyllis. Many hours were spent reading farm magazines, marking articles for the boys to read and cutting out recipes for Phyllis to practice on. In 2012 many of those well-tested recipes were made into a cookbook – Phyllis’ Favorites – in honor of their 50th year in business.

He was preceded in death by his parents, sister Marian Andersen, brother Arlyn, and infant brother Merlin.

He is survived by his wife Phyllis and his children: Robert, Jr. (Roy Masenthin) of Dorchester, NE, Randy (Patty) of Tekamah, Vickie (Bill) Shrader of Pierre, SD, Scott (Susan) of Tekamah and Kristie (Tom) DiGiorgio of Arlington, NE.

By his grandchildren: Gabe (Brandi) DiGiorgio, Ann (Dan) Brown, Matt Vogel (Kelly Ellis), Carrie (Nick) Rosenberry, Brad (Shana) Jordan, Robert Mitchell Vogel (Sara Leffler), Amanda (Scott) Reinhart, Guin (Randy) Munib, Abby (Brandon) Mathistad, Jenny (Travis) Carlson, Garrett Shrader, John (Coartney) DiGiorgio, Anders Olson, Blaine Olson, Megan Olson and Brandon Olson; and by his 21 great-grandchildren (with one on the way).

Services will be held Monday, June 19 at 10:00 a.m. at the Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Tekamah, Nebraska. Visitation is on Sunday, June 18 from 4:00 to 8:00, also at the Emmanuel Lutheran Church.