



## Merwin Bacon

March 29, 1930 - November 11, 2007

Merwin Bacon dedicated his life to his family. He worked hard to provide for his children, and he found the reward for all his effort in the warmth of their company. With the crash of the stock market in 1929, a decade of prosperity and industrial growth came to a sudden end. The Great Depression spread through the country, affecting nearly one out of every four workers with unemployment. Amid this climate of hardship, William Henry Bacon and his wife Emma Slagle maintained their optimistic spirit by looking toward a different future, the future of their family. They were expecting a child, and on March 29, 1930 they were blessed with the healthy birth of their son Merwin Emery Bacon. Merwin was born on the family farm in Custer Township in Mason County, Michigan. The youngest of six children, he grew up on the farm with the company of his brother Eugene and his sisters, Clara, Virginia, and Lenora. Another sister, Evelyn, unfortunately died at birth. He and his siblings enjoyed a traditional rural upbringing. Merwin helped with farm chores (such as making maple syrup in the family's sugar bush) and enjoyed many outdoors activities, especially hunting, fishing, and playing sports. At Custer High School Merwin was a member of the baseball and basketball teams. He also participated in an unofficial school sport: noon hour wrestling. During the lunch hour he and his friends conducted wrestling meets. By the time that Merwin graduated in 1948, he had made a name for himself as a varsity athlete and the champion of noon hour wrestling. Following graduation, Merwin and a group of friends enlisted in the Army. By the year 1950 the United

States joined the Korean War, sending thousands of troops to the Pacific Theater. In the early months of his enlistment, Merwin was stationed in Japan, before joining the allied forces in Korea at the much-contested 38th Parallel, where as a sergeant, he served his unit as the point man. After returning to the States, he was accompanied by another soldier, Ray Ault, one of his friends and a fellow Midwesterner, who were both assigned to Camp Breckinridge. This friend soon invited Merwin to spend the weekend at his family's home in Indiana. Merwin accepted the invitation, which proved to be a fateful choice. Over the weekend he met his friend's sister, an attractive young woman named Leila Ault. Merwin was immediately intrigued by her—but the feeling wasn't mutual. Although Leila was stricken by his muscular body, shaped by three years in the service and a childhood of athletics, and his sparkling blue eyes, she at first thought he was arrogant. Her feelings soon changed, and on June 6, 1952, shortly after Merwin received his honorable discharge, they were united in marriage in Petersburg, Indiana. Merwin and Leila started their life together on the farm in Custer. In search of work, Merwin accepted a position working for Dupont, and he and Leila moved to Clinton, Indiana. Merwin was a devoted family man, and while visiting at their home in Indiana, his brother and sisters soon convinced him to return home to Custer. For the next several years he worked for Howard Thiel's auto dealership in Scottville, and Bud Wheaton's service station in Custer. In 1968 he joined the Harbison-Walker construction crew. For health reasons, he retired in 1983, but took with him many great friendships. Merwin worked hard to provide for his beloved family. He was the proud father of four wonderful children. Susan was born in 1953, followed by Ron in 1955, Patricia in 1956, and Sharon in 1957. Family was always Merwin's first priority. After the Service he never felt the urge to travel. He preferred instead to stay at home, in the company of his wife and children. In Custer there were always fun things to do with the kids. For instance, you could go mushrooming, make maple syrup, or go fishing. In the wintertime Merwin and his children embraced one of their favorite activities: sledding. Merwin always waxed the sleds, ensuring that his kids were the

fastest on the hill. He also built snow forts for them and taught them how to ice skate. When the weather was too harsh, he and the kids spent the day playing cards, board games, pool, and ping-pong. Merwin was a skilled handyman. He could fix or make anything, and was always busy around the house, tinkering with a new project or working in his garden. He spent a good deal of his free time in his workshop, concocting new and clever inventions. He also loved to read, and he was constantly getting phone calls from the Library informing him that a requested book was now available. He regularly joined his buddies from work for a game of pool, and he also formed many valuable friendships at the Custer Gold Bar VFW Post 5096 where he was a Life Member. Merwin served as Commander for four years, was the treasurer for bingo and the bar, served on the Honor Guard, and always played an active role in Memorial Day services throughout the county. He later joined the Edwin H. Ewing American Legion Post 76 in Ludington, and became a life member there as well. Merwin regarded his family as his greatest achievement. In the warm company of his wife, children, and siblings, a warm smile always brimmed over his lip. Among the many people whose hearts he touched, Merwin will be greatly missed and frequently remembered. Merwin died peacefully on Veterans Day, Sunday, November 11, 2007, at Memorial Medical Center in Ludington. He was preceded in death by his parents, his brother Eugene, and his sister Clara Bacon. He will be greatly missed by his wife Leila, his children Susan Ross of Farmington Hills, Ron (Tammie) Bacon of Custer, Patricia (Robert) Gilchrist of Scottville, Sharon (Michael) McRae of Tampa, Florida; his grandchildren Kelly, Amanda, and Emily Gilchrist, Mindy (Shaun) Reed, and Dan (Ashley) Bacon; his great-grandchildren Dylan Sheaks, Kirsten Bacon, and Toby Reed; his sisters Virginia Dodson of Ludington, and Lenora Hissong of Custer; his brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law Robert and Sharon Wilson of Evansville, IN, Charles and Joyce Ault of Albuquerque, NM, and Ray and Shirley Ault of Gosport, IN; and many nieces and nephews. A Celebration of Life service will be held for Merwin at 12:00 noon on Thursday, November 15 at the Stephens

Funeral Home in Scottville, with Pastor Joe Whitaker officiating. Burial with Honor Guard rites will follow at Riverside Cemetery in Custer. Friends may meet with his family for a time of visitation on Wednesday evening from 6-8 PM at the funeral home. Those who wish may make memorial contributions to his family. Funeral arrangements are being cared for by the Wyman Funeral & Cremation Services ~ Stephens Funeral Home.