



Cliff Nygard

August 15, 1919 - February 16, 2009

Cliff Nygard, 89, Bismarck, died February 16, 2009, in Madison, WI. Funeral services will be held on Monday, February 23, at 1:00 PM at Trinity Lutheran Church in Bismarck with Rev. Steve Sathre officiating. Burial will be at Sunset Memorial Gardens. Visitation will be held on Sunday from 1:00 - 5:00 PM and 7:00 - 9:00 PM at Parkway Funeral Service, 2330 Tyler Parkway, Bismarck. Visitation will continue on Monday one hour prior to the service at the church. Clifford Nygard was born on August 15, 1919, on the family farm in Edinburg, ND, to Andrew and Anna Thoreson Nygard, the youngest of 11 children. Cliff attended a rural school and was taught by his elder sister Alice Rustan. He and his brother, Lloyd, attended the Walsh County Agricultural Training School in Park River during the week, returning to the farm on weekends. He made a name for himself in athletics and agriculture pursuits, particularly in the Future Farmers of America FFA. A scholarship to North Dakota State University NDSU, then North Dakota Agricultural College, took him to Fargo. He bicycled to Oak Grove Lutheran Academy during 1938 to run their physical education program and coach the basketball team in exchange for his room and board. During college he played on three championship NDSU Bison basketball teams. Those teams compiled the longest home game winning streak in the school's history and were North Central Conference Champs each of those years. Cliff was selected All Conference Guard in 1942. He also lettered in track as a sprinter. Cliff was elected President of the student body his senior year, was a member of Kappa Sigma Chi fraternity, and was actively involved

in the FFA, serving as State Secretary, and then State President. Cliff received the highest award, the American Farmer Degree, at the National FFA convention in Kansas City. During college he met an attractive young woman from Mayville, Doris Marie Larson, in the chemistry lab. After the first five cent coke that they shared after class, the relationship grew. Upon graduation from NDSU in 1942, he signed a contract to teach Vocational Agriculture in Walhalla, ND, spending only six weeks on the job before being called to active duty in the U.S. Navy during WWII. He received a special order discharge in December of 1942 and married Doris on December 19 in Fargo. He began teaching Vo-Ag in Northwood, ND, until he was reclassified in June 1944 and re-entered the US Armed Forces, this time in the US Army, serving in the Special Services Physical Reconditioning Program physical therapy until his discharge in August 1945 after V-J Day. Cliff resumed his teaching position in Northwood and coached the high school basketball team. He was elected Commander of American Legion Post #92 where he began his 60 plus year involvement with American Legion Baseball, having organized Northwood's first Legion Baseball team. He moved to Park River in July 1947 to set up the Veteran's Farm Training Program. He held that position until he was invited to join the Bismarck Phantoms Semi-Pro Basketball Team, sponsored by Neil Churchill, then Mayor of Bismarck. He and his family moved to Bismarck in 1948. The Phantoms played many top teams from around the region even claiming a victory against the famed Harlem Globetrotters. That team played two games against the then world champion Minneapolis Lakers, led by George Mikan. Apart from playing basketball, Cliff taught at the Veteran's Farm Training Program at Bismarck Junior College. Cliff also coached their basketball team, the Mystics, from 1952-1958. His 1953-54 team won the North Dakota Intercollegiate Championship, the Region #13 Championship, and a place in the National Junior College Tournament at Hutchinson, KS. He was honored to be part of the induction of his entire team into the Bismarck State College Hall of Fame in 2007. At BJC, he also started the baseball program and coached. Cliff taught vocational agriculture at Bismarck High

School, where he spent 23 years, retiring in 1972 after 28 years of teaching. He loved every minute of his teaching career and being a part of the lives of his students and their families. All four of his children have followed the example of their parents' strong educational values and obtained degrees in education. Following his retirement from teaching, he opened Cliff's Sales and Service, a Case Implement Dealership. After 13 years, he sold the business to concentrate on his farming operations. His farm became known as Yankee Ranch, complete with the Yankee logo on the barn visible from I-94. His passion for the New York Yankees began at age six and continued throughout his life. He later became an associate scout for the Yankees. Cliff was quite a player himself, playing for the Bismarck Legionnaires amateur baseball team. He played for and managed the Covered Wagon team, winning a central league championship with them. A special highlight of his playing career was hitting a double off the wall in one of his at-bats against the legendary Satchel Paige. For nearly 25 years, Cliff ran the North Dakota American Legion Athletic Program, increasing the number of participants in Legion ball to over 107 teams. He organized and ran every state tournament, and 6 regional tournaments during his tenure. Cliff not only was elected Commander of Lloyd Spetz Post #1 in 1997, but was still serving on the Baseball Committee for the Bismarck Post, until his untimely death on February 16, 2009. Cliff began to work as the Burleigh County Weed Officer from 1990-1997, giving him an opportunity to walk the by-roads of Burleigh County, visiting farmers, many of them former students, educating them about leafy spurge and other noxious weeds. He cared deeply about North Dakota farmlands. He cared about the quality of life for those less fortunate. He would give the shirt off his back if someone else needed it more. In 1977 he received the Bismarck Sertoma Club's 1977 Service to Mankind Award. He served a stint in the ND State Legislature as an Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms during one session and was closely watching the current legislation regarding teachers' pensions. Over the years, Cliff refereed for 33 years in basketball and 25

years in football, logging over 2000 basketball games and over 600 football games. He dabbled in sports broadcasting with KFYZ Radio. Cliff has been widely recognized for his contributions to North Dakota athletics: he was elected to the North Dakota Officials Association Hall of Fame in 1971, the North Dakota State University Bison Athletic Hall of Fame in 1984, the North Dakota American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame in 1990, the Bismarck State College Hall of Fame in 1993 in honor of his coaching skills, and named an Honorary Marauder by the University of Mary. Cliff, a member of the Teammakers Club at NDSU, rarely missed a football game, and made every basketball game that was possible. He even managed to persuade a doctor to give him a day pass from the hospital to allow him to be in the Kohl Center in Madison and root his Bison on to victory over the University of Wisconsin in 2006! Cliff was a member of the Bismarck Elks and also of Trinity Lutheran Church since 1949. Above all else, Cliff was a man who loved his God, family, and country. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Doris; his children, Virginia Nygard Wood of Port of Spain, Trinidad, Gordon Donna of Phoenix, AZ, Judy Mike Broekemeier of Mora, MN, and Joni Tim Heggstad of Madison, WI; his grandchildren, MarieBuon Nguyen, Stephanie and Bryan Nygard all of Phoenix, AZ, Sadie Broekemeier of Minneapolis, MN, and Daniela Heggstad of Madison, WI; his great-grandchild, Tyler Nguyen of Phoenix; his sister, Alice Rustan; his sisters-in-law, Martha Nygard and Aris Larson; and many loving nieces and nephews. Cliff's family wish to acknowledge the many special friends who were also proud to call him uncle, dad or grandpa throughout the years! Cliff was preceded in death by 9 of his 10 siblings together with his parents. Memorials will be used for charitable projects begun in Cliff's honor for his work in education, agriculture and athletics.

Tribute Wall

WM

“ Enjoyed meeting Cliff and especially enjoyed his stories about the years working as a referee and umpire. I was lucky meeting Cliff to share our experiences and passion working in our free time to remain involved with the sports we enjoyed playing as kids. I am sure Cliff will be missed.

Wes Meixelsperger - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

AJ

“ I was saddened to hear the news when staff was informed about your father's death. You have my deepest sympathy and we know he is in a better place. Keep in Touch! Blessings, AJ

Andrea Johnson - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

DJ

“ Cliff was always a good neighbor and a gentleman to visit with. He'll be missed by many.

Dave Josephson - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

KK

“ What a wonderful man Cliff was, we are honored to have known him! My boys are glad they were able to cheer for the Bison with Cliff at a few football games they attended together over the years. He will be missed by many, but never forgotten. Know that you are in our thoughts and prayers at that difficult time. Love and prayers, Kim, Jim, Brayden & Alyssa Koenig

Kim Koenig - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JN

“ I celebrate Kippy's rich life--a life filled with so much love and nurturance for family and friends and a life of passion for sports, education, and agriculture. He made a big difference in my life, and he touched so many lives! His zest for life is an inspiration to all who knew him!

Joyce Nygard - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

TN

“ I'm sorry to hear of Cliff's passing. I'm sure he would have wanted to go another quarter or inning. But God apparently wanted him home on home plate. His was the longest obituary I've ever read and it was certainly not boring; being an old basketball player myself, but a pleasure to read and I'm a proud niece of an awesome great uncle! My sympathies to Doris and my cousins as you grieve, but also celebrate a life well lived! Much love and God Bless as you celebrate his life and recall many joyous and rich memories. Love, Teresa Nygard, Fargo, ND

Teresa Nygard - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

CT

“ I enjoyed working with Cliff throughout the years both as a fellow dealer and as a ND Legionaire. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Curtis Twete - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JH

“ I feel compelled to convey enormous gratitude to Cliffs family for sharing his life with us all. My husband was fortunate enough to have Cliff as an instructor at BHS and I had the great opportunity to meet him at the school banquets--he was always very kind and warm----the entire class and those who knew him had much respect for him and gratitude for all he gave to us. May the memories sustain you and may the Love and Grace of God bring you all Peace.

Julie Hoiby-Kuhn - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

LM

“ You are so blessed to have shared your life with this wonderful man! Take all the joyous treasured memories- let them wrap around your sorrowed heart... And now that he has played the final inning, Cliff would love to see you smile, for he gave you his best, as was his nature. May his legacy live on through your lives, inspiring projects that will establish his ideals! My thoughts and prayers are with you all! Love, Lori

Lori Mondry - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

SH

“ Mr. Nygard was my home room teacher at BHS in the late 60's. I remember him as a great, funny and fair man. Years later, I would see him at the Drumstick Cafe having coffee. He never forgot me I don't know if that's good or bad! and we always had a good conversation. I was deeply saddened to read of his passing. He will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved him. May peace be with his family.

Sharon Buchholtz Haider - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

VU

“ *Doris and Family: We join his host of relatives and friends mourning Cliff's passing. I observed and admired Cliff's outstanding leadership in directing the North Dakota American Legion's youth Baseball Program as Chair of the Department Athletic Committee spanning 24 years. His sterling character, unlimited energy, and tremendous enthusiasm inspired youth to strive for achievement in educational and athletic pursuits, as well as to become good sportsmen and model citizens! Barb joins me in conveying our sincere sympathy to you and your family, in deep respect, as we remember the exemplary life of Cliff Nygard!*

Vernon Useldinger - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

BS

“ *Cliff Nygard*

Bill Sullivan - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JN

“ *On this Father's Day, I just wanted you to know...you are remembered with love! A love that only a daddy gives his little girl! You always gave your all to everyone you touched. I pray that Heaven is truly a wonderful place , one where we will meet again, because I miss you. As I watched Tim this Father's Day with our Baby Doll, I know your big heart, gentle hands and ways have influenced him too in the way he parents. And Daniela tells stories about times shared with her Bapa and vividly remembers those good times. Dad, we love you and miss you so much! Hugs & Kisses, Joni*

Joni Nygard - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

OH

“ Our prayers are with the family and I enjoyed the many years I had working with Cliff in American Legion Baseball. He was a great leader and fine friend. Thanks Cliff

Orlin HANSON - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM



“ Cliff Nygard

March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JK

“ Our deepest sympathies and prayers are with you at this time. Cliff will be deeply missed !! We all wish we could be there with you. May the many happy memories you have had with Cliff comfort you and help to celebrate his life. All of our love

Jamie Klund - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JN

“ Cliff Nygard

Joyce Nygard - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

SW

“ God bless you!

Susan Williamsen - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

MU

“ To the entire Nygard family, Our deepest sympathy to all on the loss of your dear husband, father, grandpa, uncle. It was a privilege to know him. I hold many fond memories during my high school years at the Nygard home. Mr. and Mrs. Nygard always made us feel so welcome. God bless Mr. Nygard. You will be missed. In Love and Friendship, Margie Carriedo and Bob Underwood

Margie C. Underwood - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

MA

“ My favorite memory of Cliff was when on our sons birthday, Doris and Cliff bought him a gift of a baseball set. Cliff joined my son and husband in the driveway for a game of baseball where Cliff played as the pitcher. They had such fun together. He will be greatly missed by my entire family and I feel very blessed that I have known him and his family. God bless.

Maren Arbach - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

LH

“ We're so sorry to hear of your loss! What a blessing that your dad was able to know your little girl - if only for a short time. You're in our thoughts and prayers.

Liz Hanson - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM