

## They Made A Difference

As we journey through life we have to make many choices. Some of those choices can affect others, either in a positive way or a negative way. As a result, our choices may well have a lasting effect on the people we meet, our community, our county, and in a broader sense on our society. A prime example of this might be characterized by Bob and Mary Arneson and the positive influence they had on Martin County through their quiet leadership and dedication.

Upon graduating from college Bob accepted a teaching position in Lakefield. Shortly before the academic year started, he met his future wife, Mary. The following summer they were married and Bob continued in his teaching position. However, during that time he had made the decision to change careers and become a dentist. Consequently, he resigned from his teaching position after his second year in Lakefield and entered the University of Minnesota Dental School.

Bob, and his wife Mary, moved to Fairmont in 1961 and he opened a dental practice. They quickly became involved in many community endeavors. Mary was active in the Salvation Army and at one point received the "OTHERS" award. This is given to someone who is always caring for "others" and at that time had only been given out twice in the then 87 year history of the Salvation Army. She was also active with the library, working with Bob on the restoration of the opera house, and numerous other community endeavors.

Bob was involved with and active in Fairmont-GO, Boy Scouts, AFS student exchange, the United Methodist Church, the American Cancer Society, and the United Fund. He was also honored as the recipient of the Exchange Club's Book of Good Deeds Award in 1983.

Neither Bob nor Mary sought recognition or accolades for their accomplishments. They were considered quiet leaders that dug in and got the job done while inspiring others along the way. They were optimistic and imaginative always attempting to be involved in a constructive manner and in turn making the community a better place.

Perhaps the one thing that this couple will be most remembered for is their part in the restoration of the Fairmont Opera House. It has been stated that Bob was, in fact, the driving force in being singlehandedly responsible for the restoration of the Fairmont Opera House. Without his leadership, drive, and dedication this county treasure might not be in existence today. Undoubtedly, the Arnesons would not want to be credited for being solely responsible for its survival but would likely give credit to many others that were involved along the way. However, it's likely that anyone familiar with the history of that project would credit the Arnesons for the important part that they played in that venture and the lasting effect it has had on our area.

Unfortunately, both Bob and Mary Arneson were killed in an automobile accident in November of 1984. Their untimely death was a tragedy that shocked the community and left the entire area grief stricken. One might only wonder what positive ventures they might have been associated with had their lives not been cut so short.

The Arnesons, as with all of us, made choices throughout their lives. They chose to make a difference in a positive way that was exemplified by their actions and deeds. John Izzo, from his book *"The Five Secrets You Must Discover Before You Die,"* said "Your checkbook is not your success – the people you meet and influence in your life will be your success." That quote might seem to epitomize the Arnesons and the influence they've had on Martin County. It would seem unlikely that anyone would dispute the fact that what they accomplished during their lifetime left a lasting and enduring legacy to Martin County and all of its citizens.

For more information on this topic, or to become a member, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.



**Above:** Dr. Bob and Mary Arneson have become closely associated with saving the Fairmont Opera House, but they also gave in many other ways to their community.