

**By Russ Pankonin**

***The Imperial Republican***

One of Imperial's oldest businessmen, Walt Hofman, 92, passed away at his home last Thursday, June 4.

Hofman and his brother, Vic, were best known for the welding and machine shop they operated together on West 5th St.

Hofman and his wife, Elsie, moved to Imperial in 1942 where Walt continued to hone his skills as a mechanic.

He worked for the local International Harvester dealer before starting a shop with Vic in 1959.

In 1960, the brothers converted the dairy building on West 5th to the shop and added a floor hoist.

Walt's son, Stan, of Champion, said his dad had a magic touch when it came to working on things.

"If somebody couldn't get something to run, they always brought it to dad and he could always get it running," Stan said.

And if he didn't have the part he needed, he could make it, he added.

He could just listen to an engine and know what was wrong with it.

Many times, farmers would bring in broken equipment and he would fix it and make it better, Stan recalled.

He said they encouraged Walt to patent some of his innovations but he simply said he wasn't interested in that.

Stan said Walt especially loved working on the metal lathe and was a master welder.

"If it could be welded, he could do it," Stan said, whether it was fine jewelry, a heavy tractor axle or truck frame.

Stan remembers when Walt converted the metal lathe so it would turn the meat grinder when they would make liver sausage.

Hofman worked side by side with his brother for nearly 50 years. Even at the age of 91, Walt would still go down to the shop.

However, after Vic passed away, Stan said his dad lost his passion for working in the shop.

"Dad was a great example. Dad really served the public and was a great Christian example," Stan said.

Right on his work bench, Walt had the words, "Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. Is he yours?"

Walt was a lifelong member of the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church and was active in the Imperial Zion Lutheran congregation over the years.

Services for Hofman were held Saturday.

He is survived by his wife, Elsie, of Imperial; four sons, Kenneth and wife, Sharon, of Bellevue, Neb., Glenn and wife, Carol, of Elwood, Neb., Don and wife, Amy, of Marysville, Kan. and Stan of Champion; two sisters, Dora Malone of McCook and Erma Hoeme of Scott City, Kan.; sister-in-law, Helen Hofman of Salida, Colo., and brother-in-law, George Gruber of Lexington; along with many grandchildren and step grandchildren.

A complete obituary appears on page 5.