

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

The Imperial business community lost a long-time business owner with the Sept. 13 death of Lila Prior, 87.

Prior owned and operated Prior's and Sew Forth, a fabric and gift store, on Imperial's main street.

Despite her age, Prior was actively involved in the store until earlier this year.

"Mom's love was people," her son Merlin said this week,

In fact, that's what got her involved with the store in the first place, he said.

From 1952 until 1975, Lila helped her husband, Wendell, with the operation of their machinery dealership here in Imperial.

Merlin said his mother enjoyed being around people in the dealership and missed that aspect after they sold the dealership in 1975.

An expert seamstress in her own right, she began helping part-time at Iona's, a fabric store owned by Iona Peterson.

In 1980, she purchased the store from Peterson and launched a business career of her own.

Lila always believed in buying quality fabric which helped build the reputation of the store among sewing and quilting enthusiasts.

The store served customers in a 150-mile radius, along with many others who passed through Imperial and had heard about her store.

She grew up on a Dundy County farm, south of Wauneta. After marrying Wendell in 1942, the couple bought a farm northwest of Hamlet.

They farmed together until they sold the farm in 1952 and purchased the machinery dealership in Imperial.

Lila passed away at Chase County Community Hospital Sunday, Sept. 13.

Funeral services were held Saturday, Sept. 19, at the Wauneta Church of Christ with interment in the Riverside Cemetery there.

She is survived by her children: son, Merlin Prior and wife, Janet, of Imperial; daughters, Janeta Fong and husband, Nelson Fong, Underwood, Iowa; and Marcia Prior-Miller of Ames, Iowa, 13 grandchildren, 14 great grandchildren; and a sister, Fern Peters, of Superior, Neb.

A complete obituary appears on page 5.