Bill Van Beek was a wonderful man, a hardworking, honest man, who devoted his life to providing for his beloved family. He was a loyal husband, loving father, and doting grandfather and great-grandfather. Bill was an outdoorsman, a true man’s man, but at his heart, he was most of all a family man.

Bill’s story began on a cold fall day in 1917, in the little farming town of Westfield, North Dakota. Those were such difficult times in this country, as the dark skies of World War I thundered overseas, as the hardships of war were felt so deeply here at home. The year 1917 was a time of great uncertainty for so many Americans, yet on November 3, Bert and Hannah Van Beek found reason to celebrate, with the birth of their second child, a son they named William.

Bill was a part of a large family with two sisters and eight brothers on the family’s farm. All of the kids had their share of work to do around the ranch. Like so many young boys in those days, Bill attended school through the fifth grade, when his attention and energy was required full time on the family farm. Bill helped his dad with nearly everything on the farm, including his dad’s side business as a horse trader. His dad left it up to little Bill to break the horses!

When Bill became a teenager, the country soon was pulled into the quagmire of the Great Depression, and times were so difficult for so many. Wanting to help his family, Bill left the family farm and headed west to Washington State, to work on a dairy farm. After a year in Washington, he briefly returned home to North Dakota, before hopping on a freight train bound for Holland, Michigan, where he heard about jobs in a sugar beet factory. Bill faced a new life ahead of him, all at the tender age of 16.

Bill worked hard in the beet factory, but he also found time for some fun, too. One night Bill went to the local roller rink, where he spotted a beautiful young
girl named Bea O’Connor. He introduced himself, and the two quickly hit it off, and began dating. Before he knew it, he and Bea were married.

The husband and wife soon became father and mother, with the birth of their first child, daughter Sandra. With the black cloud of World War II looming, Bill and Bea were expecting their second child when a thin white envelope arrived in the mail, calling Bill to serve his country. By the time William Jr. arrived, Bill had gone through basic training, and was stationed in New York. By then, the war was also nearing its ending, however, and Bill was never sent to fight overseas.

Bill was eventually discharged from the service, and it wasn’t long before he and Bea welcomed their third child, son Ronald, who rounded out the happy family in 1949. Bill provided for his growing family by working at a variety of factories in the Holland area, often working long hours. Eventually, he worked his way up to a supervisor’s position at Rem die cast, where he remained until 1982, when he was able to retire at the age of 65. His happiness of retirement was tempered by the death of his son William Jr., in 1979, which affected him deeply.

But after a lifetime of hard work, Bill thoroughly enjoyed his retirement he so richly deserved. He loved spending his newfound free time hunting, fishing, or playing pool. On occasion, Bill also helped with his son Ronald’s Tree Care business. He also had a passion for heading up to the family cottage up north, to go hunting, or simply spend time with his family.

Family was always the most important part of Bill’s life, and he thoroughly loved spending time with his grandchildren and many, many great-grandchildren.

Sadly, Bill’s beloved wife Bea died in 1998, and eventually, Bill moved to the Resthaven Care Center in Holland. Bill died there Saturday, January 13, 2007, at the age of 89.
Today his life, and his example, lives on in all who knew him. He will be greatly missed.

He was preceded in death by his wife Bea in 1998, and his son William Van Beek Jr. in 1979, and his two great grandsons, Timothy Lawrence and Jared Rapp.

He is survived by his daughter, Sandra Kuipers of Hamilton, and his son and daughter-in-law, Ronald and Ann Van Beek of Holland; eleven grandchildren, and several great grandchildren; his brothers, Gilbert and Alberta Van Beek of North Dakota, Roy Van Beek of Miami, FL; his sisters, Ruth Maier of Lynden, WA, Diane Van Beek of Lynden, WA; his sisters-in-law, Dorothy Van Beek of Lynden Washington, Esther Van Beek of ND, Donna Van Beek of WA, and Alma Van Beek of WI; and his nieces and nephews.

Funeral Services will be held on Wednesday at 11:00am at the Dykstra Lifestory Funeral Homes, Mulder Chapel, 188 West 32nd Street with Rev. Arnold Van Beek officiating.

Visitation will be held on Tuesday from 7-9pm at the Mulder Chapel.

Burial will take place at Pilgrim Home Cemetery

Memorial Contributions may be given to Resthaven Patrons.

Arrangements by Dykstra Life Story Funeral Homes, Inc., Mulder Chapel, www.lifestorynet.com