



Tom and Regina Nistler Scholarship

Regina was born and raised in Hettinger County north of Mott, North Dakota. She attended rural school and eventually earned her practical nurse degree from St. Joseph School of Nursing in Dickinson, North Dakota. Tom was born and raised west of Golva, North Dakota, in Golva Valley County. He graduated from Golva Consolidated School and then spent four years in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War, mostly in Hawaii and Okinawa. The two met while attending a wedding, and shortly after that they celebrated their own marriage at St. Placidus Country Church on August 30, 1955.

Taking residence in Dickinson, Regina was employed as an LPN. Tom, fresh out of the Navy, tried his hand at a couple of years at Dickinson State Teachers College. In 1957, after his college experience, Tom found employment as a salesman with Gambles Corporation. *"In those days there was no such thing as a forty-hour work week ... you could work eighty hours in order to make sure you could support your family,"* comments Tom.

Over the next twelve years, the Nistlers lived in many cities in South and North Dakota, and the majority of the time Regina would find employment as a nurse. In 1960, Tom was made assistant manager at the Aberdeen, South Dakota, Gambles Store, and in 1962, he became manager of Gambles in Milbank, South Dakota. In 1964, they moved to Brookings, South Dakota. Finally, in 1967, they were transferred to the Devils Lake Gambles Store. In 1969, Tom and Regina decided to purchase the store and created the well-known Lake Region legacy, Nistler's Hardware.

Nistler's Hardware was an integral part of the vitality of the downtown economy from 1969 to 1996.

Reflecting, Tom says, *"We miss the contact with the customers, and the business ... in retailing there was something different every day."*

Devils Lake became home to the Nistlers. They raised four children—Pam (Richard) Schneider, Kevin (Mari), Sheila (Curt) Himle, and Keith—and are proud of their grandchildren. Not only did their store make an impact on the spirit of Devils Lake, but Tom and Regina have been true community leaders. Tom received the prestigious *Outstanding Citizen Award* in 1991. He's a Devils Lake Area Chamber of Commerce Red Coat Ambassador. He also has served on the chamber's board of directors and the St. Mary's School Board, United Way, City Planning Board, Senior Citizen Board, Heartland Care Board, St. Joseph's Church Council, and the Gambles Advertising Council. He served for seven years as a member of the Gambles Advisory Board and recently completed two terms on the Community College Foundation's board of directors. Regina, also an active participant in the community, was involved with the Lake Region Corporation board, the Special Needs Vocational Technical Board, and Lake Region Special Olympics. Both Tom and Regina are active at St. Joseph's Church.

They have confidence and high hopes for the future of Devils Lake. *"It's a vibrant community ... We wouldn't be afraid to go back into business ... with this scholarship we can help students continue in the Marketing program. We feel the community has been very good to us, and this is one way we can re-pay with our gratitude."* The Tom and Regina Nistler Endowed Scholarship is awarded annually to benefit a Lake Region State College student enrolled in the Marketing/Merchandising program. ♦