



Hazel (Vanderlin) and Lucas “Gus” Kirchoffner Scholarship Endowment

Hazel and Gus Kirchoffner were first-generation Americans born to immigrant parents of Belgium and Germans-from-Russia descent. Both were born in Mercy Hospital in Devils Lake. After seven years of courtship at Grand Harbor Home-makers Club picnics, barn dances, and dinners, they were married the ninth of May in 1938 at Saint Joseph’s Catholic Church.

Hazel’s father, Frank Vanderlinden, came from Brussels, Belgium, with his parents to Browns County, Wisconsin, in 1871. In March of 1882, he came to North Dakota and entered a claim to land in Section 36 of Grand Harbor Township. He subsequently married Alida DeClarke who had immigrated from Aultrie Saint Marie, West Flanders, Belgium, to marry him.

Their daughter, Hazel, was the youngest of their eight children. She graduated from Saint Mary’s High School in Devils

Lake and subsequently worked at the F. W. Woolworth Company and later in the business office of Mercy Hospital for several years. She was active in the Parent-Teacher Organization of Saint Mary’s, sang in the choir at Saint Joseph’s Catholic Church, and was a member of the Catholic Daughters of America and Pioneer Daughters.

Gus was the oldest of four and born in Devils Lake to August and Francis (Heilman) Kirchoffner. August and Francis had immigrated from the town of Elsass in the German Kutschurgan Colony in South Russia as part of the Germans-from-Russia movement. If one looks at the Town Plan of Elsass, one would see the names of many families who settled in the Devils Lake region.

Gus worked for Gamble-Robinson Company for a short time before becoming

a switchman for the Great Northern Railroad. He, too, was active in Saint Joseph's Catholic Church and the Knights of Columbus. In his younger years, he was a volunteer fireman with the Devils Lake Fire Department.

Hazel and Gus made their home on Fourth Street across from the KDLR radio station where their first two children—Frank and Aleda—were born. They later moved to 1002 Third Street where Donald and twins Tom and Terry were born.

In 1962, they moved to West Fargo, North Dakota, due to the merger of the Great Northern and Burlington railroad companies. After retiring in 1974, they

moved back to Devils Lake and settled on Creel Bay near the Vanderlin homestead. There they continued their hobbies of gardening, boating, fishing, hunting, and Saint Joseph Catholic Church activities.

As so many of their generation, Hazel and Gus worked hard to give their children the education they never had. One can say they did succeed. All the Kirchoffner children graduated from college with degrees in nursing, teaching, and law enforcement. They agree that Gus and Hazel would be proud to have an endowment supporting students in those career fields in the Kirchoffner and Vanderlin names. The first award was made in 2018. ●



The Kirchoffner family—Front row, l-r, Hazel, Gus, and Aleda (Col. USAF). Back, Frank, Don (Col. USA), Tom, and Terry.

