



60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



Jeannette E. Miller, 88, who with her husband Kenneth owned and operated Coca-Cola Bottling in Minot for many years, died Wednesday, May 7, 2008, at a hospital in Bismarck, N. D. For the last six months, she had been residing at The Waterford, 1000 West Century Ave., in Bismarck.

She was born in Webster, Minn., Nov. 30, 1919, the third daughter of Olaf and Emma (Holgerson) Docken. She was reared there and in Northfield, Minn., where she moved with her family in 1929. The first years of her education were in a one-room school. She then attended and graduated from Northfield High School in 1937.

During the Depression, when jobs were scarce, she joined her sister Norma in Minneapolis and sought work in the secretarial field. After several temporary positions, she obtained a job in the investment department of Northwestern National Life Insurance Co., a position she held until her marriage to Kenneth L. Miller on Sept. 16, 1939.

Thus began a personal partnership that continued for 67 years until his death Nov. 12, 2006, and a business partnership with Coca-Cola that lasted until the sale of the Minot Company in 1993. His career with Coca-Cola began in 1938 in Minneapolis. Following their marriage, he was transferred to Duluth, Minn. They returned to Minneapolis in 1942, and moved to Minot to manage the company's bottling plant in 1945. By the early 1960s, the family was sole owner of the Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Minot. They also were involved in M & S Concessions, a Minot food and beverage business Ken founded with another business partner in 1954.

In 1945 Jeannette and Ken started raising their family in a small apartment above the Minot Coke plant. In 1957, they moved into a new home in Minot's Green Valley neighborhood, where they remained until 2004, when they moved into The

Brentmoor in Minot. Jeannette moved to Bismarck to be closer to family in the fall of 2007.

Her chief job at the Coke plant was as office manager and bookkeeper. Ken concentrated on sales and public relations. She was “one tough cookie” as a bookkeeper, daughter Janene Baertsch recalled. “Many people preferred doing business with Dad,” she said. Yet they shared a conservative and honest business philosophy, the business grew, the work was demanding, and they built the Minot business into one of the leading per capita franchises in the country.

Eventually, their children were also part of the business. When sons Leon and Jeff started working part time jobs at the company, they donned the signature Coke uniform of that period: white shirt and trousers featuring a green pinstripe—the same uniform their dad wore. For Jeannette, this meant daily laundering and ironing three fresh uniforms in the days before pre-pressed clothing was available. She continued as office manager until 1972, when the couple’s son-in-law Richard Baertsch took over those duties, giving Jeannette some time off after years of ten- and twelve-hour days. She continued as a corporate officer with the firm until her retirement.

She didn’t have to iron uniforms anymore, so she applied her tireless work ethic to her gardens and her kitchen, a frequent stop for grazing family members and neighbors. Ken was an avid hunter and angler, so Jeannette became a legendary game and fish cook. Ken and Jeannette hosted an annual wild game dinner for fellow snowbirds in South Padre Island, Texas, where they spent 28 winters together. They loved to host large family gatherings, and developed a tradition of communal family cooking which has continued for three generations. Jeannette’s mother, “Grandma Emma” Docken, taught her to make lefse, and she shared her expertise with her children, grandchildren,

and great-grandchildren, who she supervised in lefse production as recently as last winter.

She was a longtime member of First Lutheran Church and active in women’s groups there. She was a member of Quota Club in Minot, a women’s service club, and of the North Dakota Bowling Association where she served as state secretary. She and Ken traveled much of the world, including trips to Europe, Hawaii, Alaska and the Caribbean. She was an avid golfer, and scored two holes-in-one during winters in Texas. Jeannette had an uncanny memory for names—an ability she carried until her death, remembering the names of the nurses who tended her from one shift to another.

She is survived by sons, Leon K. (Jocelyn) Miller, Madison, Wis., and Jeff L. (Peggy) Miller, Bismarck and Naples, Fla., daughter, Janene (Richard) Baertsch, Garrison and Lake Havasu City, Ariz.; grandchildren, Christopher Miller, Katrina Field, Carmen Miller, Hans Miller, Chelsey Baertsch Kovalchick, Rachael Baertsch, Keaton Miller and Danneka Miller; great-grandchildren, Julia and Brant Miller, Freya Field, Grace, Mia and Camille Miller, Claudia Purdon, Lassen and Scarlet Baertsch Kovalchick.

In addition to her parents and husband, she was preceded in death by her sisters, Kay Farness and Norma Rooney, a brother, Elmer Docken, and an infant grandson.

Memorials are preferred to the First Lutheran Church Foundation or the Minot Public Library Laying the Foundation Fund Drive.