

Standard Form For Members of the Legislature

Name of Representative \_\_\_\_\_

Senator Beneke,

Donald Garner - Represented Buena Vista, Calhoun and Pocahontas  
Counties, Iowa

1. Birthday and place 14. Mar 1916 near Laurens, Iowa

2. Marriage (s) date place

① Mardell Zell 11 Mar 1939 Iowa City, Iowa

② Eleanor Peterson 8 June 1982 Pocahontas, Iowa

3. Significant events for example:

A. Business Member of the Iowa Bar Association; director of the  
Laurens State Bank; he was admitted to the bar in 1939

B. Civic responsibilities Mason; American Legion; Veteran of  
Foreign Wars; Pocahontas County Historical Society

C. Profession Attorney

4. Church membership

Methodist

5. Sessions served 60<sup>th</sup>, 61<sup>st</sup> General Assemblies 1963, 1965

6. Public Offices

A. Local Laurens school board member for several terms; Laurens City  
attorney; Council for the Laurens - Marathon Community School District

B. State \_\_\_\_\_

C. National \_\_\_\_\_

7. Death 17 Feb 1990 Pocahontas, Iowa; Buried Laurens Cemetery, Laurens, Iowa

8. Children Donald A.; Ann; Mary; step-son - Dr. Neil  
Peterson; step-daughter - Carol Weiss

9. Names of parents Anton and Theresa (Mefferd) Beneke

10. Education Educated in the Laurens, Iowa public  
schools graduating in 1933.

11. Degrees Juris Doctor degree in 1939 from State University of  
Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa as well as B.A. in 1937

12. Other applicable information Republican

- He started his law practice in Belmont, Iowa 1939-1943
- Military service - World War II - U. S. Army 1943-1945
- His first wife, Mardell, died in 1978
- When he returned from military service he resumed his law  
office once again.



## Longtime attorney, Donald Beneke Passes away Saturday, February 17

A longtime Laurens attorney, Donald G. Beneke, passed away Saturday, February 17 at the Pocahontas Community Hospital. Mr. Beneke had been in ill health for some time. He reached the age of 73 years, 11 months and 3 days.

Funeral services were held Tuesday, February 20 at the United Methodist Church of Laurens at 11 a.m. Roy Lewis, pastor of the church officiated at the services. Florence Pohlman was organist and Dennis Larson was soloist.

Honorary pallbearers were James W. Hudson, Don Siddall, Jack Blake, J. Desmond Crotty, John E. Hodges and Richard DeYoung. Active pallbearers were Tom Mefferd, Dewayne Peterson, Dennis Fitzgerald, Dwight VanGenderen, Ron Cowan and Dale Roewe. Burial was in the Laurens Cemetery with military rites. Arrangements were under the care of the Smith Funeral Home.

**Donald G. Beneke**

Donald G. Beneke was

born March 14, 1916 on the family farm in Swan Lake Township near Laurens, the son of Anton and Theresa Mefferd Beneke. A 1933 graduate of the Laurens High School, Don later attended the State University of Iowa, attaining a Juris Doctor degree in 1939.

That same year on March 11, he was united in marriage to the former Mardell Sell at Iowa City. After passing his Bar exam, Don started practicing law in Belmond. After serving in the U. S. Army during World War II, Don returned to Laurens. Last June, he received his 50 year plaque from the Iowa Bar Association. After Mardell's death in 1978, he was united in marriage to Eleanor Peterson on June 8, 1982 in services at Pocahontas.

Mr. Beneke served on the Pocahontas County Red Cross since the early 1950's, he was Pocahontas County Attorney from 1951 to 1954 and he was a State Senator from 1961 to 1965. He had also served on the Laurens School Board for several

terms. He presently was a director of the Laurens State Bank, was serving as the Laurens City Attorney and was counsel for the Laurens-Marathon Community School district.

He was a member of the United Methodist Church of Laurens, the Grace Masonic Lodge # 519, A.F. and A. M., the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Pocahontas County Historical Society and the Iowa Bar Association.

Mr. Beneke is survived by his wife Eleanor, a son, Donald A. Beneke of Pocahontas; two daughters, Ann Beneke of Laurens and Mary Beneke of Iowa City, a step son, Dr. Neil Peterson of Brookfield, Wisconsin, a stepdaughter, Carol Weiss of Milwaukee, 4 grandchildren, 6 step grandchildren, three brothers, Leland of Vinton, Raymond of Ames and James of Council Bluffs and three sisters, Lucille Ellson of Vinton, Marjorie Jensen of George and Helen Overdahl of St. Paul.

## Association sor dance

ments and the development of the life sustaining cardio-pulmonary resuscitation technique.

Everyone knows of someone who has benefited from the work being done by the AHA. This research and education is vital. Please help the American Heart

## Council okeys second iron filter for new water plant

The Laurens City Council approved the purchase of a second iron filter for the water system. The bid accepted on the filter is for \$89,777 from General Filter of Ames, Iowa. The filter will cost \$58,600 and the remaining amount is the cost of installation and plumbing. The Specifications for this filter are approximately the same

Rohlin Construction of Estherville who made bids as follows: project 1. \$7,183.36, 2. \$4,543.55, 3. \$2,247.00, 4. \$29,497.50, 5. \$13,665.95 for a total of \$57,137.36 and a bid of \$82,368.20 for the Pocahontas County portion of the bid. The other bid was from Blacktop Service Company of Humboldt. Their bids were as



# Laurens "100"

Chronicle of our first 100 years

archery achievements. Served in Air Force three years when he was killed in an automobile accident. Eleven years later, his father and I started for Alexandria, Minn. We got as far as Charles City when on the highway some young man hit us and Mr. Morris was dead on arrival at the hospital. I spent quite some time in the hospital there, then on to St. Lukes here in Cedar Rapids.

I have been retired for several years and living in my own home. My address is: Mrs. Wallace J. Morris, 521-34th St. N.E., Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402.

You can see I have had tragedy in my life but I have kept the Faith and carried on knowing full well that we never walk alone for "Our Heavenly Father" is always with us. What a Heavenly Blessing.

### ANTON BENEKE FAMILY HISTORY Swan Lake Township

Anton Beneke was born northwest of what is now the town of Palmer, Iowa, on November 28, 1884, the son of Rudolph Beneke born in Sudgeorgesfehn, Germany, and of Anna Smrkovsky Beneke born in the Smrk area east of Prague, Czechoslovakia. He attended country school west of Palmer and as a young man became a surveyor, laying out many tile lines in the south part of the county.

On February 25, 1914, he married Theresa Mefferd who was born June 28, 1888, near Pomeroy, Iowa, the daughter of Axel Mefferd born at Rodsoe in Hallestad Parish, Sweden, and Amanda Karf Mefferd born at Lerbeck in Bo Parish, Sweden. The family name was originally Johnson but since no one had thought of a nine-digit Zip Code in those days the name was changed to Mefferd at the suggestion of the post office department as the south part of the county had so many Johnsons the post office could not keep track of all of them. Theresa became a school teacher in the country schools in the southwest part of the county. Although she was not certified to teach a foreign language she gave instruction in English to many little Swedes whose families and neighbors spoke only the mother tongue.

After their marriage, Anton and Theresa moved to the southeast quarter of Section 9 in Swan Lake Township and farmed this place until 1947 when they retired, moving to Laurens. Anton died on April 28, 1969. Theresa now lives at the Good Samaritan Center in Laurens.

Their children are James L. born September 4, 1929, who married Laura Witte of Fremont, Nebraska, an airline hostess. They have three sons, James, John and Charles and live in Council Bluffs where Jim is a vice president of Council Bluffs Savings Bank. Helen was born April 6, 1927, married Curtis Overdahl of Elk Point, South Dakota, and they live in St. Paul, Minnesota, where Curtis is an agronomist. Their children are James, Michael and

Barbara. Marjorie was born June 15, 1922, married Perry Jensen and they live in George, Iowa, where Perry is a veterinarian. Their children are Roger and Debra. Leland F. was born on February 5, 1921, married Shirley Siefken of Rembrandt and they live in Vinton where Lee is in the farm management business. Lynn, William and Ann are their living children, Craig having died in infancy. Raymond R. was born August 14, 1919, married Marjorie Mather of Laurens and they live in Ames where he is an economics professor at Iowa State University. Their children are Janet and Patricia. Lucille was born December 30, 1917. She married Floyd Ellson, a native of Minnesota who was formerly a school superintendent, serving last at Webb, Hubbard and Vinton (where they now live), Floyd having retired. Four children were born to the Ellsons: Jane, Jean, James and Joy. Donald G. was born March 14, 1916, married Mardell Sell of Gowrie, Iowa, a registered nurse who died on May 16, 1978. They have three children, Donald Jr., Ann and Mary. Don Sr. has practiced law in Laurens since April, 1946.

All of the children of Anton and Theresa attended the Laurens Consolidated School, first riding the horse-drawn bus, later the same kind of bus mounted on a Model T chassis and then the type in use today. Donald G. graduated from the University of Iowa and Lucille from Iowa State Teachers College. The other five children all graduated from Iowa State College (now University) at Ames. The three girls were all school teachers and Lucille continues to teach at the School for the Blind in Vinton. Daughters-in-law Shirley and Marjorie are also school teachers.

After their retirement, Anton and Theresa traveled extensively in the United States. Since they were first generation Americans they became well aware of the contrasting conditions in this country and Europe and were intensely loyal to American traditions and ideals.

### DONALD G. BENEKE FAMILY HISTORY

Donald G. Beneke was born on the family farm in Swan Lake Township on March 14, 1916. He attended all twelve grades of the Laurens Consolidated School, graduating in 1933. He received the Juris Doctor degree from the University of Iowa in 1939 and was admitted to the practice of law in the same year. On March 11, 1939, he was married to Mardell Sell, a native of Gowrie, the daughter of Oscar and Olivia Sell, and a graduate of the Gowrie High School and the University of Iowa School of Nursing. That same year they located at Belmond, Iowa, where they worked until January, 1943, when Don was called into the service, being discharged from the Army in 1945. During this period of service he was with the Air Force military police in England

Our family super-market gave us plentiful supplies of good food; the cost was hard labor.

Since there was no way our farm income could supply each child's individual wants and needs, our parents channeled us into activities important in their value scale. Only as we matured did we come to appreciate the wisdom of their choices.

We all had musical instruments and all took private lessons. Viora Minnich, Gertrude Newell, and Florella Kelley are three special music teachers who come to mind.

We were taken to Sunday School and church. Often Mother didn't go (I suspect she breathed a sigh of blessed relief when we were wedged into the car), but she saw to it that Dad and the rest of us went. During our growing years, Rev. Lease, Rev. Seward, and Rev. Ward were the leaders of the flock at the Methodist Church.

Our first lesson in racial tolerance occurred when some black singers from a Methodist school in the south were invited to spend the night in our home.

We were encouraged to read books and newspapers. About every two weeks we would get a batch of new reading material from the community treasure — the Carnegie Library — and the keeper of that treasure, Mrs. Edna Coffin.

We were active in youth organizations. Don was a Boy Scout under the fine leadership of Oscar Erickson, and most of us were involved with 4-H. In our girls' club, Mrs. Olive Potee both inspired and prodded us to "make the best better."

Of all the priorities our parents considered good investments for their offspring, education was without a doubt the most important. The question after each one graduated from the Laurens Consolidated School was not whether we would go to college, but rather where we would go and what we could afford. One of our parents' greatest joys in later years was listing the educational achievements of their seven children, each of whom attained a minimum of a baccalaureate degree, and of their grandchildren, each of whom has completed college or is working on a degree. ". . . Success is doing well whatever you do . . ."

From our roots set in Germany, Bohemia, and Sweden and transplanted to Pocahontas County, new runners have emerged through the years, and 1982 finds the family in the following locations:

Mother — now 93 — Good Samaritan Home, Laurens; Donald — lawyer, Laurens; Lucille, ex-teacher, Vinton; Raymond, departmental head, Iowa State University, Ames; Leland, farm manager and real estate dealer, Vinton; Marjorie, ex-teacher, George; Helen — ex-teacher, St. Paul, Minn.; James, banker, Council Bluffs.

Now new branches are an outgrowth of the runners, and we leave to the 20 grandchildren and the great-grandchildren, both living and yet unborn,

the pleasure of writing the history of our family for the next 100 years. May they be thankful for the legacy that is theirs, may they appreciate the values that were important to their forbears, and may they be a success in the way their grandparents were!

— By Marjorie Beneke Jensen

#### DOMINIC [Pete] BELLINGHAUSEN FAMILY

Pete and I, along with our children, Gary, 3, Roger, 2, and Diana, 6 months, moved to Laurens in Pocahontas County in June of 1949. We purchased a house from the late George Hinn in the northwest part of town, Lot 6, Block 9. Pete was employed by Fred Homuth at the Ford garage. Pete, a mechanic, also turned carpenter as our older home needed much work.

We came from Glidden in Carroll County, Iowa, where we both were born. Pete's family lived near Roselle and later at Maple River. I was born near Breda, Iowa, and later our family also moved near Maple River.

We were married in St. Francis Church in Maple River, Sept. 5, 1945, and made our home on a farm near there until the fall of 1946 when we moved to Glidden, where Pete operated a filling station until our move to Laurens.

Pete's forefathers are mostly of German descent and mine are from Belgium and the Netherlands. Tracing family history is a hobby of mine. With the help of distant relatives in Belgium, I've traced back to 1550 on my mother's (Margaret Rutten) side and to 1690 on my father's (John Venner) side. My grandparents (Henry Rutten and Mary Snyder Rutten) soon after their marriage Feb. 1, 1888, in Breda, Iowa, left by covered wagon for Kansas to stake a claim. They lived in a sod shanty and according to grandmother's stories, the rattlesnakes were plentiful. Due to a hot, dry, summer with no crops, their stay there was a short one. With no money or feed for their horses and cow, they sold the things they could spare, loaded their wagon, and started back to Carroll County. Leaving about October 1, they traveled six weeks before reaching Mt. Carmel, Iowa, just one week before my mother was born on November 22, 1888.

In our immediate families, Pete is the oldest of 17 children and I am one of 12 children, so cousins by the dozens is a true fact in our family.

This year of 1981 finds us still living in the same house at 516 Rush Lake Road that we bought 32 years ago. Pete is now a self-employed part-time mechanic, due to ill health. I'm employed with the Head Start program and also a seamstress. We are active members of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Laurens. I've just completed my 20th year as a religion teacher in our C.C.D. program. We also are the custodians at Sacred Heart Parish.