



# Walnut Village Assisted Living & Senior Apartments

March 2010 newsletter

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613 Walnut Street  
Yankton, S.D.  
(605) 664-4220



[www.walnutvillagecare.com](http://www.walnutvillagecare.com)

Velma currently lives on the 3rd floor of Walnut Village, but she spent her childhood in Nebraska. “I grew up in Plainview,” said Decker. “My parents were farmers. My mother was a city girl. My father brought her home after World War I when he came home from the Army.”

Velma and her husband, David who passed away, moved to Yankton 50 some years ago. “My husband worked for the Corps of Engineers. We moved to Yankton when the Gavins Point Dam opened and all of our kids graduated from here,” said Velma. “Yankton is a nice town, a very nice place.”

Velma and her husband had four children, two sons and two daughters. Their oldest son recently passed away but lived all over the world serving the U.S. Army. Their youngest son currently lives in Pierre and works for the Board of Corrections. “My oldest daughter just retired from nursing in Rapid City. Her husband was a car dealer,” explained Velma. “And my youngest daughter and her husband are retired as well and live in Yankton.”

She has seven grandchildren and 20 great grandchildren. “There are four I haven’t seen yet but

the rest I’ve seen. Part of them live around the area so they visit,” said Velma.

Right now, Velma mostly reads. “I’m not much of a hobby person. I’ve done a lot of volunteer work. There used to be a clothing store where we took in used clothing and sold it. I worked at that for about 20 years and I was on the board there,” said Velma. “I’ve done a lot of church work as well as things with my kids like Boy and Girl Scouts. I did all the regular things that mothers used to do.”

Chuck, Walnut Village’s marketing director, used to call Velma the “Queen Bee”. “I kind of got after him so he doesn’t call me that so much anymore,” commented Velma as she laughed.

Walnut Village’s opening was perfect timing for Velma and her husband. They moved into their apartment on June 4, 2004. “My husband was not well and I needed help. Walnut Village was just opening then so I was one of the original people to move in. They are very pleasant people to be around. The food is good and I am very lazy,” Velma said with a chuckle.

Featured Resident  
**Velma Decker**  
By Jamie Crew

## Walnut Village March Events

**Tuesday, March 9, 10 a.m.**-Worship with Pastor Lindgren in the Great Room

**Wednesday, March 10-** St. Patrick’s Day

**Saturday, March 20-**First day of spring

**Tuesday, March 23, 10 a.m.**-Worship/Communion with Pastor Lindgren in the Great Room

**Tuesday March 25, 2:30 p.m.**-Birthday party

## March Birthdays

4-Hod Nielsen

5-Chris Adam

11-Dotty Honomichl

22-Heidi Tramp

24-Annette Bessey

28-Millie Lane

29-Altha Mayer

# Walnut Village: School to Senior Living

By Jamie Crew



The buildings located on 613 Walnut Street have seen many different settings over the years. From middle and high school students, to retired citizens and their loved ones visiting, Walnut Village Assisted Living and Senior Apartments has an extensive history.

In 1916, a three-story brick building was constructed which was to be used as the Yankton High School. From the beginning of this landmark, many important milestones have occurred. Even the election to create it was historical.

“The city election required to construct the school building was the first time women were allowed to vote in Yankton,” said Lois Varvel, Yankton historian.

Leonard Tacke has fond memories of the building when it was a high school. “I attended Yankton High School in the mid-40s,” he said. “I remember we had study hall in the library which is now Walnut Village’s Great Room and we would sit up on the stage and pull the curtains a little bit and play cards instead of study.”

In the spring of 1958, Tom Brokaw was among the last class to graduate from Yankton High School in the current Walnut Village building.

“I remember we had study hall in the library which is now Walnut Village’s Great Room and we would sit up on the stage and pull the curtains a little bit and play cards instead of study.”  
-Leonard Tacke

The building located to the south of Walnut Village was built in 1927 and was used as the Yankton High School auditorium. Many historical activities took place there. State basketball championships were played, Lawrence Welk’s Orchestra rented the building for a public dance, and many famous

musical groups performed there including The Chicago Opera Ballet Company, the Belafonte Folk Singers, and the Vienna Choir Boys.

Walnut Village is currently using the auditorium for general storage. “I know we’re encouraged to watch the progress and I know they have plans for the future,” said Varvel.

“I’m interested to see what will happen with the gymnasium. It could turn into an exercise or spa center for seniors to do exercises on a daily basis.”

When the Yankton School District decided to put the old high school up for auction, Varvel launched a campaign to preserve the building, since it was scheduled for demolition if not sold.

“My plan was that the Dakota Territorial Museum would occupy a good share of what is now Walnut Village,” she said. “There would also be room for an art center and some of the individual classrooms could have been used as studios for individual artists.”

In 1998, Gary Blom attended the auction for the former Yankton High School buildings. "I bought the property for \$52,000 at auction. It was mainly because I didn't want to see the history of these old buildings destroyed," Gary said.

His wife, Casey Blom, feels the same way. "Initially I felt it was an investment but as the project progressed, I too wanted to preserve and restore the beauty of the buildings."

The Bloms saw a need in the community for a senior apartments building and the property seemed like a perfect fit. The main building housed 27 classrooms and 21 were remodeled into senior apartments. Others were used to create a game room, beauty shop, exercise room, and activity room.

The old high school's gym is now used for a dining and sitting area as well as a small chapel and shuffleboard room.

"Residents' family members say they argue over who gets to go eat lunch with Grandma at Walnut Village," said Casey Blom.

On the first floor, there are 18 assisted living apartments. What used to be the school's library is now Walnut Village's Great Room with reading and sitting areas.

"As soon as the first resident moved in, I switched my focus to making Walnut Village the best place possible for our elders

to be well cared for and for their families to enjoy the building as well," said Casey Blom. "Gary and I experienced our own children not comfortable at their great grandparents' apartments, so I wanted to make Walnut Village a family friendly environment. I believe we have accomplished that because more than once I have seen great grandchildren being dragged out of the building kicking and screaming because they wanted to stay longer."

"I have hopes for the future and am ever so glad that the buildings were rescued because we were never going to build buildings that beautiful again."  
-Lois Varvel



Yankton High School

In June 2002, the Walnut Village buildings were listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the "Yankton High School Historic District."

"The Bloms have done a marvelous job with Walnut Village," Varvel said. "I have some friends who live

there and are very pleased with everything that goes on. I

have hopes for the future and am ever so glad that the buildings were rescued because we were never going to build buildings that beautiful again."

If you would like to inquire about available apartments or would like a tour of the historic Walnut Village Assisted Living and Senior Apartments, please contact Gert Thomas, Walnut Village's administrator, at (605) 664-4220. Also check out the website at [www.walnutvillagecare.com](http://www.walnutvillagecare.com).



# Walnut Village Valentine's Day Royalty 2010



Queen Phyllis Skalberg

King Chris Adam



## Tulip Festival Yankton Transit Bus Trip

Those over 60 to  
Orange City, Iowa.  
Saturday, May 1  
\$15 per person  
See Gert for  
details.





## Week days at Walnut Village

Exercises--10:30 a.m. by pond  
Coffee break--11 a.m. following exercises  
Games--2:30 p.m. cards, dominos, Wii  
Social time--7:30 p.m. in dining room

Want the Walnut Village  
newsletter through your e-mail?  
Go to [www.walnutvillagecare.com](http://www.walnutvillagecare.com)  
and click on "Contact Us".

*A Card Shower  
has been planned  
for  
Pete & Virginia Blom  
on their  
55th Wedding Anniversary  
on March 14, 2010*

Cards may be sent to the couple at:  
c/o Walnut Village  
613 Walnut Street, Suite #205  
Yankton, SD 57078

1955 Wedding Photo
2005 Anniversary Photo

*Note of Sympathy...*  
Walnut Village residents and  
staff would like to send their  
condolences to the family of  
**Kathleen Teget.**  
May God grant peace.