

'It's a lot better than a big city,' folks say

By Gary Dodge
Press-Gazette

ZACHOW:— Family-owned businesses are a big part of life in Zachow.

"When you live in a small town, it's a lot better than a big city. We're all one family," says Dora Baker, 83, in her husband Mert's barbershop on Main Street.

Zachow is one step off the beaten path. It's two miles north of Wisconsin 29 on Shawano County F.

"People are very thoughtful. I walk to the post office, and people say 'hi.' It's a friendly community," says Carol Staszak, 45, whose family owns Staszak Feed on Hilbert Street.

Mert Baker, 84, knows just about everyone here. He's met many people during the 62 years he's clipped their hair.

He moved to Zachow in 1929, when he met his wife, Dora.

"A guy told me if you stay in town three or four years you can't move," Mert said.

"Don't try to get away with anything in Zachow because people will know about it," says Dennis Westerfeld, 42, of Westerfeld Oil Co., also on Hilbert Street. His father, Ernest Westerfeld, started the business in the 1930s.

Other businesses in Zachow include Graf Creamery Co., Radtke Service Center, Hobby's Grocery, Schmidt's Bar, Jim's Bar and Carol's Wedding Flowers.

They thrive because of determination, says Harry Radtke, 62, who owns the garage his family started in 1920.

Land agents began selling property here to German immigrants in the 1860s, says Marge Bleick, whose family owns Graf Creamery on Creamery Street.

Germans who moved to the area wrote back to their families saying it was similar to Germany, she says.

Marge's father, Albert Graf, bought the creamery from L.M. Schoen in 1926, Dora Merts says. In 1953, Marge and her husband, Robert Bleick, took over the business.

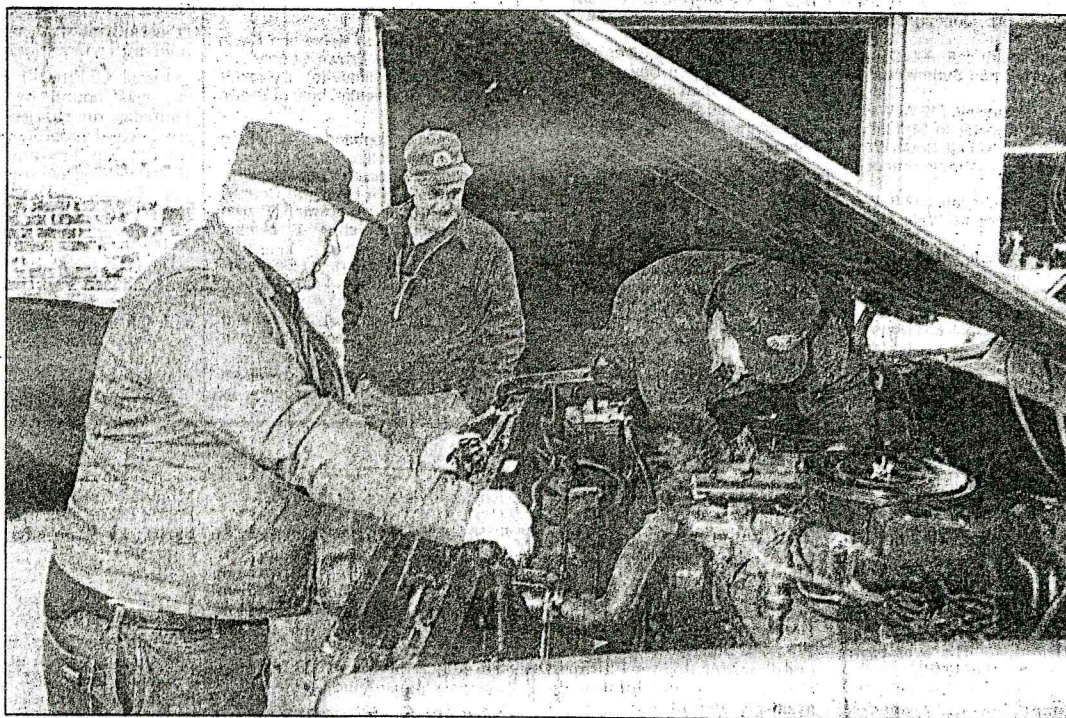
Country charm, a quiet lifestyle and a good place to rear a family are a few reasons people live here.

Most residents are retired, and at least seven couples have been married for more than 50 years. Three couples have been married for more than 60 years, says Carol Habighorst, 45, while tending her store, Hobby's Grocery, on Hilbert Street.

Community spirit in Zachow is alive.

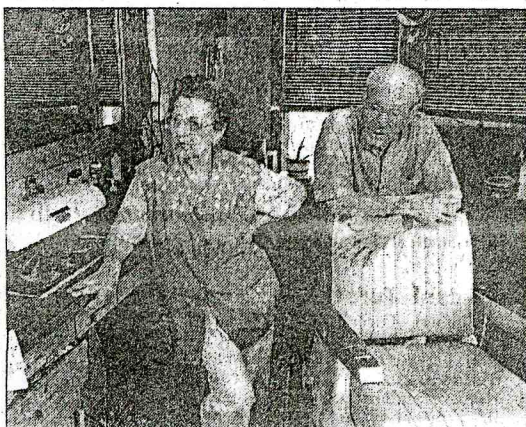
A sportsman club releases pheasants for hunters every year. The 4-H Go-Getters hold an annual dinner. People recently built a baseball backstop for youths, says Leon Westerfeld, 54.

By all appearances, Zachow has it all. "There's a creek (the Pensaukee River) for kids to fish in, woods for them to run in, and it's not a big metropolis," says Jim Bleick, 37.



Watchful eye: Harry Radtke supervises employee Keith Pitt, of Green Bay as he works on a truck

owned by Wallace Radloff, Route 2, Bonduel. Radtke's Service Garage is in Zachow.



The cutting edge: Above, Dora and Mert Baker discuss the old times in the barbershop they set up in the front part of their Zachow home. At right, Kay Zernicke, 6, jumps rope on the loading dock of Staszak's Feed, Zachow, while baby-sitter Carol Staszak watches.



The Zachow file

- **Population:** About 120 (estimated by resident Jim Bleick)
- **Founding father:** Fred Braumschreiber founded the community when he built a general store nearby in 1890.
- **Name changes:** The community had three name changes. It was first known as Nayda, for Braumschreiber's daughter. Then it changed to Netley. It finally

received a permanent name when W.C. Zachow had it changed to Zachow, according to a document by Henry G. Dirks in 1969.

- **Schools:** Students attend the Bonduel School District or area parochial or private schools.
- **Churches:** Zion Lutheran Church and St. Paul Lutheran Church.

Next week: Green Valley in Shawano County

