

## Frank Gering Honored in Memorial Ceremony

By Dave Koy

It was an ideal day for a memorial dedication. God had provided a cloudless blue sky with a bright sun that bathed nearly 50 friends and family members in warm, early morning sunlight. The occasion was the April 28<sup>th</sup> ribbon cutting ceremony and dedication of the Frank Gering Memorial Deck at the Garden Apartments, part of Wausau's Forest Park Village Senior Living Complex.

Frank and his wife Polly had been residents of Forest Park Village since 2000. It was their charitable acts, Christian love, and their unique relationship with the staff and residents of Forest Park Village that inspired the deck project.

*"For a long time we wanted to put a deck on the back of the Gardens," explained Amy Forst, Director of Operations at Forest Park Village. After Frank's passing last year the Gering family came forward with financial donations to the deck project. "Once we announced that the deck would be in honor of Frank and Polly the project seemed to take on a life of its own," said Amy. "Within 3 months the residents and staff raised the \$3,500 for materials. Volunteers from the Elks Lodge and Wesley Methodist Church graciously stepped forward to donate the necessary labor. Just like Frank's life, it was Christian charity in action," Amy stated.*

The dedication ceremony featured two hymns sung by Pastor Karen Rendall of Homme Home along with a dedication blessing by Pastor Steve Gjerde of Zion Lutheran Church. Frank's daughter, Judy Thorsheim, speaking on behalf of the Gering family, shared some memories of her 96-year old father. *"Dad always thought of himself as God's servant here on earth," said Judy. "He pursued that responsibility throughout his life, not only in the church, but in the community as well."*



*Frank's Daughter Judy Thorsheim shares a few memories about her Dad.*



*Polly Gering cuts the ribbon with the help of her and Frank's girls: Jane, Judy & Joyce.*

It was in 1930 at the youthful age of 17 that Frank Gering gave his life to God, and began a 79-year ministry of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with everyone he met. His marriage to Polly in 1937 began a journey that produced three daughters, Judy, Jane and Joyce, six grandchildren, 5 great grandchildren and a mutual ministry to Christ that lasted 72 years.

Frank wore many hats in his ministry to others, from being a youth leader and Sunday school teacher at Wausau's Immanuel Baptist Church, to his duties as Baseball Chaplain to the Wausau Timbers and current Wisconsin Woodchucks baseball teams, a ministry he himself founded in 1980. During his 51-years as a Gideon, Frank helped distribute nearly 55,000 Bibles. Larry Lombardo, a fellow Gideon and current Chaplain to the Woodchucks, recalls the qualities that made his friend unique. *"Frank's legacy is not about baseball chapel, the Gideons, having a deck named after him, or all the other things he did as a Christian and good citizen,"* said Larry. *"Frank's legacy is that he was a man after God's heart. What he did, he did to glorify God, not himself."* A plaque Frank kept on his desk with the scripture verse from Colossians 3:23 reminded him of those priorities: *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as if you are working for the Lord, and not for men."*

An outdoorsman, he loved to photograph God's creation and share those pictures with family members and friends at Forest Park Village. *"Frank especially enjoyed taking pictures from his 5<sup>th</sup> floor apartment window of the changing seasons,"* said Monica Howe, Activities Coordinator at Forest Park Village. *"Pictures of the first white snowfall carpeting the ground were always his favorites."*

One of his great joys in later years was to visit Wausau's Franklin Elementary School where he often read to the kindergarten children or had them read to him. Always the humorist, Frank often boasted that the school was actually named after him. Four generations of the Gering family began their education at the Franklin Elementary School.

It was Frank's 94-year-old wife, Polly, who cut the ribbon officially opening the garden deck dedicated to her husband. Ironically, the hill upon which the deck is built was a special place for Frank. He and his brothers often played there when they were kids. According to Amy Forst, the Gering Garden Deck shares the same view that Frank and Polly had enjoyed for years, and Polly still enjoys. *"The view from the deck is quite inspiring, just like the Gerings,"* said Amy.

Staff and residents of Forest Park Village will miss the smiling face and good-natured kidding of their popular tenant. But stories about their legendary friend will be told and retold by friends and family members as they gather on the Frank Gering Memorial Deck to enjoy the beautiful garden surroundings.

Frank Gering – he may no longer be with us, but memories of him will long remain.



*Memorial plaque honoring all who supported the project.*