

'Tool Crib' founder Kuhlman dies at age 73

■ Grand Forks man built Acme Electric into nationwide mail-order business

By Kate Sweeney
Herald Staff Writer

George Kuhlman, a Grand Forks businessman who built a nationwide mail-order business from a base in Grand Forks, died Saturday in United Children's Hospital, St. Paul, after a stroke. He was 76.

Kuhlman owned Acme Electric Co., which advertised itself as "The Tool Crib of the North." He started the business in 1948 as Acme Electric Motor Co. on South Third Street. Today, it has retail outlets in Bismarck, Minot, Fargo and at 1705 13th Ave. N. in Grand Forks. A fifth store is to open in Duluth in December.

The company began mail-order sales in the early 1980s, and the mail-order division now employs 60 people in Grand Forks. The warehouse is at 11th Avenue North



Kuhlman

and North 17th Street.

In the company's 96-page full-color catalog, Kuhlman outlined his business philosophy: "I feel a kinship has developed over these past 40 years that goes beyond the usual business/customer relationship. Mutual trust, confidence and our dedication to serving the customer has made this relationship possible."

"What he was, was a hard worker," according to his son, Daniel, now president of the company.

He instilled that work ethic in his descendants.

Grandson Steve Kuhlman, who grew up in the business and is now the marketing manager, said that George Kuhlman "taught us, if you walked by a full garbage can, you emptied it."

Longtime friend Harold Harney remembers Kuhlman's kindheartedness. A mutual friend was in a nursing home without air conditioning. After a visit one summer day, Kuhlman went to his shop, found an air conditioner, had it serviced and took it back the following day, Harney recalled. "He did this all his life."

George Kuhlman was born July 16, 1919, in Huron, S.D., the son of George and Anna (Teschetter) Kuhlman. He attended schools in Huron and Gaylord, Minn. He married Clarice Peterson April 13, 1941, in East Grand Forks.

He is survived by his wife, sons,

Daniel, Grand Forks, and Wayne, North St. Paul, Minn.; daughter, Cherylyn (Mrs. Gerald) Ericson, Hatton, N.D.; nine grandchildren, four great-grandchildren; brother, James, Osakis, Minn.; and sisters, Ella (Mrs. Joshua) Hofer, Huron, and Laura (Mrs. George) Schild, Wheaton, Minn.

■ **Services:** 1:30 p.m. Tuesday in

Calvary Lutheran Church, Grand Forks.

■ **Visitation:** 5 to 7 p.m. today, with a 7 p.m. prayer service, in Amundson Funeral Home, Grand Forks, and one hour before services in the church.

■ **Burial:** Memorial Park Cemetery, Grand Forks.