

Palmer Alvin Stadum (1909-1999)

**Pioneer in ND's Rural Electric Co-operatives
and Model Builder**

**"Home" was always the North Dakota prairie.
Machines always fascinated him.**

Palmer was the oldest child of John and Gina Stadum, Norwegian immigrant homesteaders he always described as "progressive." His father had come to Benson County by horse and buggy but became the first township farmer to own a car. He let Palmer (age seven) drive it in the pasture; when Palmer was eighty, he remembered that event as "one of the big thrills of my life!"

He had many stories about seeing his dad make and improve tools in the farm's blacksmith shop. Together, the two of them had watched railroad workers lay the spur -line from the Soo Line Railroad into the new town of Baker. And when his dad bought a *second* car from someone in Baker, Palmer (now eleven) drove it home in first gear with his dad following in the older car. His first job in threshing season was to haul straw for burning in his dad's Reeve steam engine. He graduated to being the fireman on the engine, and at sixteen, became engineer. During harvest season Palmer got up early and rode his motorcycle to wherever the threshing rig was parked and happily greased the gears before the crew arrived.

Sunday afternoons he read at his uncle Peter's farm near-by. Peter was another progressive Norsk immigrant with subscriptions to *Popular Science* and *Scientific American*. Palmer read about simple one -tube radios with antennas and plans for