Vendor...

A friend drove his truck home and it broke down two blocks from home.

People smile when they think of Tony, with his top-button closed work shirt and wrinkled smile.

A student said when she opened the door for him once, he plunked an apple in her hand and said, 'have an apple. They're good for your cheeks'.''

Another student said she talked to Tony often and sat with him when he ate in the kitchen of her sorority house. She said that was why he gave her a small basket of strawberries almost every day last spring.

But Tony was a businessman, his customers say.

Wilson said he charged about the same as a grocery store for his produce, but was very reasonable.

"If he had something on his truck that seemed a little high he'd say, 'Okay, you can have it for such and such'.''

Nancy Schneider, Sigma Chi fraternity housemother, said she never had a complaint about Tony.

She said if a head of lettuce was bad he would replace it the next day. If he didn't have something she needed on his truck, he would go and get it.

"Whenever I didn't buy much he'd say, 'how do you expect me to get my wife a new pair of shoes,' and he was a bachelor the whole time,'' she said.

Tony's sister, Mary Scolaro, said he always had a story at night, and it was never the same one.

Johannes said he would tell her and the cooks one joke, and the busboys a different one that she couldn't

hear.

"Tony would tell the raunchiest stories and I'd accuse him of making them up,'' said Gladys Hall, owner of a downtown restaurant. "And he'd say yet, that's exactly what I did, Mrs. Hall.''

Wilson said people would laugh and say that Tony still had the first nickel he ever made.

According to Hall, Tony always said he was saving money to make up for what his father lost when the banks closed during the depression.

In spite of Tony's joking pleas to "help a poor guy out,'' Hall said she thought he was "quite well-fixed'' financially.

Mary said business was good in the winter, but summer slowed trade down, Tony would work in his garden.

She said he would sell some vegetables from his garden, but it was mainly a hobby for him.

"Mary said Tony only missed one day of work when I put him in the hospital last June.'' But she said he checked himself out and went back to work the next day.

Tony lived with his sister since their mother died in 1968.

The rest of the Italian family's seven children have left Lincoln.

The story of the Scolaro's fruit business started when Tony's father took a day off from his job at a shop, said Johannes.

She said the story is that he bought a bunch of bananas from a fruit vendor to take home to his seven children. On the way home, when everyone asked what he was going to do with all those bananas, he sold them all and made more money than he would have in a whole day of work.

No matter how the business started, Tony carried it on, and pleasing his customers was his top priority.

"His business was his life,'' Wilson said. "That was Tony.''

"He died doing what he thought was important—taking care of his customers,'' his sister reflected. Tony was 63.

Hall said she could see that Tony was dragging lately,'' but when she asked why he didn't retire he said, "My customers don't need me, but I sure need them.''

Photo courtesy of Gladys Hall

One of Tony Scolaro's customers recently asked him why he didn't retire. Tony replied, "My customers don't need me, but I sure need them.''