

Harold McIlrath ^{614-R} 8-9-2018

The auction gavel for Harold McIlrath, lifelong resident of Laurel, hammered for the final time on the night of August 3rd, 2018. God said "Well done, good and faithful servant." Harold was in the peace of his home, with family by his side. Just three days prior he was able to celebrate his 78th birthday with his family.



Funeral services were held at 11:00 a.m. Wednesday, August 8th, at the Laurel United Methodist Church. The family requested all attendees to

dress casual. He was laid to rest at the Graceland Cemetery in Laurel. Visitation was held from 9:00 until service time at the church. Following the service, lunch was provided by the family and church. Memorials may be directed to Iowa River Hospice or Laurel United Methodist Church. The Mitchell Family Funeral Home is caring for Harold and his family. Ph. 641-844-1234.

Harold was born on July 31st, 1940, in Marshalltown. He was the son of Hazen and Vera (Weissenburger) McIlrath. Harold graduated from Laurel High School in 1958. A born auctioneer, he was the youngster on the front porch of the family home imagining he was the man with the gavel. Actually, he was even much younger sucking his thumb while sitting on dad's lap at the Marshalltown livestock auctions when the passion struck. After graduation, he followed his passion and attended auctioneering school in Ames. His first auction was held on Saturday after graduating that Friday.

Harold sold for five livestock auctions a week and logged 50,000 to 75,000 miles a year (not including air miles). He loved what he did and it showed. Harold sold his farming operation in 1965 and focused on auctioning full time. He was the recipient of numerous professional acknowledgements and earned the respect of countless colleagues and friends. In 1976, he sold over 100 horses at a single auction. His career took him from Laurel to selling horses in 30 states including Alaska and three Canadian provinces, gaining a reputation of one of the best auctioneers going.

Harold was a partner of the Blue Ribbon Sale in Des Moines, won the Iowa Livestock Auctioneer Award and was named Iowa Champion Auctioneer for the Iowa Auctioneers Association. He was a member of the Laurel United Methodist Church, Masonic Lodge, and the Iowa Auctioneers Association (serving as former president). He would be the first to admit he was the luckiest man alive doing what he loved breaking into the auction business. Harold also had a love of border collies.

The first love of his life was Jolene Mairs, the daughter of Raymond and Dorothy Mairs of Gilman. The two were united in marriage on January 23rd, 1959, in her hometown. The couple were blessed with three children - Sara, Shelly and Sam. Once the children were old enough to show competitively, they followed dad's love of showing farm animals - sheep, horses and hogs, also earning numerous awards. His love for his family was unconditional.

Left to cherish his memory are Jolene, his loving wife of 59 ½ years; his children: Sara Wattonville of Collins, Shelly (Scott) Schmitz of Baxter, and Sam (Marci) McIlrath of Laurel; grandchildren: Cody Schmitz of Colfax, Riley Wattonville of Great Falls, Montana, MacKenzie Schmitz of Ankeny, Saylor and Sofie Wattonville of Collins, and Reagan and Rayne McIlrath of Laurel. Also surviving are his sisters-in-law Ardith (Terry) Housman of Marengo, Mary Conner of Des Moines, and Pam Long of Le Grand; cousin Sammy Wilson of Belfast, Northern Ireland, and numerous friends and contemporaries.

In death, Harold rejoined his parents, Hazen and Vera; uncle and aunt Hugh and Sylvia McCleery, uncle John Wilson; and in-laws Raymond and Dorothy Mairs.