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10-25-2018

James H. McIlrath



James H. McIlrath, 79, of Grinnell, Iowa, died on October 22, 2018, at the Mayflower Community in Grinnell. He succumbed to Parkinson's disease.

A memorial service has been scheduled for 10:30 a.m. Friday, October 26th, at the Grinnell Christian Church with the Rev. John Epperson, Grinnell Regional Hospice Chaplain, and Pastor Joel Nielson, Madison Church of Christ, both officiating. Burial will be held at a later date at Prairie View Cemetery in Gilman.

Visitation with the family presents will be held one hour prior to the service at the church.

Memorial contributions may be directed to the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA).

The son of J. Harley and Geneive (Iske) McIlrath, Jim was born in his grandparents' home west of Newburg, Iowa, on May 8, 1939. As a boy, he enjoyed riding ponies and helping his father on the farm. He attended school at Newburg, where he played basketball and baseball, and graduated as a member of the Newburg High School Class of 1957. After high school, Jim served in the U.S. Army Reserves and continued working on the family farm with his father. From 1961 to 1971, he managed the Farmers' Coop Elevator in Newburg before leaving to farm full-time with his father and brother. After retiring from farming in 1986 Jim found success raising Belgian draft horses and serving as an auctioneer with his brother as McIlrath Auctioneering.

Jim was united in marriage with Patricia Henchal on February 11, 1959, at the Grinnell Christian Church. Their son J. Harley III was born in 1961, and Jim held a special place in his heart for his grandchildren, James Harley IV born in 2000, and Grace Elisabeth born in 2003.

For many years, Jim enjoyed playing with teams in the Grinnell men's fast pitch softball league, most memorably with Sully Plumbing & Heating and Killduff. He was a deacon and elder in his church, and served several years on the Poweshiek County Fair Board. Jim belonged to a large, close-knit family, and he welcomed any occasion that brought them together, whether it was working in the field, an auction, or a family dinner. At heart, he was a farmer. He found pleasure in walking among his cows in the pasture and he found satisfaction in a straight row of corn and a clean field of beans.

He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Patricia; his son, J. Harley III; his grandchildren, James Harley IV and Grace Elisabeth; and his siblings, Sharon (Ron) Johnston, Nancy (Jim) Williams, Marlene McIlrath, Kathy (Pat) Brown, and Stanley (Pam) McIlrath.

PCCR 10-31-2018 James "Jim" McIlrath

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