

6H-R
4-13-2020

Lester Tharp



Lester Tharp, age 89, of Grinnell, died on Friday, April 10, 2020, at St. Francis Manor in Grinnell.

A private family service will be held on Tuesday, April 14, 2020, at the Grinnell United Methodist Church with the Rev. Dave Crow officiating. Interment with military honors will follow at Hazelwood Cemetery in Grinnell. A public visitation and funeral service will be held at a later date due to federal and state COVID-19 guidelines on limited gatherings.

Memorials may be designated to the Grinnell United Methodist Church or to the

St. Francis Manor Foundation, mailed in care of the Smith Funeral Home, PO Box 368, Grinnell, Iowa 50112. Memories and condolences may be shared with his family online at www.smithfh.com.

Lester Joseph Tharp, the oldest son of Jacob Lester Tharp and Vega Alice (Lacina) Tharp, was born on May 13, 1930, in Tama, Iowa. As a small boy, the family resided in Gilman, Iowa. In 1943, they moved to Grinnell and Les graduated with the class of 1947.

Les attended Iowa State University and studied engineering for two and half years. Tired of school and soon to be drafted, he enlisted in the United States Army and served sixteen months in Korea. He returned home in 1954 and met his soon-to-be-wife, Kay Gould. They were married on February 10, 1956, at the Grinnell United Methodist Church. They were blessed with three sons, Jeffrey, Phillip and Bradley.

After working at two drugstores while going to college, Les decided to try a career in pharmacy and enrolled at the University of Iowa College of Pharmacy in the fall of 1954. He graduated in 1958 and Les moved his family to Ottumwa. In 1960 he received a call to come back to Grinnell to work for Earl Mathews. Two years later, Ernest Turner wanted to retire and Les decided it was time to operate his own pharmacy. Tharp Pharmacy began in March of 1962 and operated for 37 years until it was sold on March 3, 1999.

Following his retirement, Les helped out at several area pharmacies, but the most rewarding was working for Gordon Alexander and staff in Montezuma. It was a fine way to end his career in pharmacy.

Les served on several county boards during his career but was most proud of serving on the planning board of Grinnell Regional Hospice. Les was honored twice by the governor of Iowa for his service to the community. He volunteered as an ombudsman for patients of St. Francis Manor for 17 years, retiring in 2018. He was honored in 2008 by the Iowa Pharmacy Association for having practiced pharmacy for 50 years. In 2013 he felt quite proud to go to Washington DC on the Honor Flight. In 2018 he was honored as Grand Marshall of the Grinnell Fourth of July parade.

Les is survived by his wife of 64 years, Kay Tharp of Grinnell; three sons, Jeffrey (Teresa) Tharp of Alva, Florida, Phillip (Stacy) Tharp of Clive, Iowa, and Bradley Tharp of Mason City, Iowa; four granddaughters, Andrea (Brad) Lebrun, Lindsey (Steve) Grys, Elise Tharp, and Chloe Tharp; six great grandchildren, Olivia, Evelyn, Sophia and Isaac Lebrun, and Xander and Miles Grys; two step-grandsons, David and Travis Hobson; and his siblings, Roger (Myrtle) Tharp of Princeton, Texas, and Joyce Estal of Oskaloosa, Iowa. He was preceded in death by his parents and a brother, Larry Tharp.