

John Richard Eilts, 82

Nov. 23, 1934 - April 16, 2017

GRAND ISLAND, NE – John Richard Eilts was born on the family farm in Wiota on November 23, 1934 to Herman and Wilma (Hansen) Eilts. He was baptized and confirmed at the Zion Lutheran Church in Atlantic. He attended the Cass County Country grade schools and went to Atlantic and Walnut High Schools, graduating from Walnut High School in 1953.

As a boy, John was active in 4-H and FFA, and was Cass County 4-H president. He was in the Army at Ft. Leonardwood, MO and Colorado Springs, CO. In June 1958, John graduated from Iowa State University with a B.S. in Animal Husbandry. John was a proud member of the "National Champion Livestock Judging Team" for Iowa State in 1956 (enjoying reunions with his teammates to this day) and also the Iowa State Dairy Judging Team. His summer employment during college included jobs at Page, Guthrie and Shelby County Extension offices. During college and after graduation (1958-1960) he was employed as Youth Assistant for Shelby County Extension Service. John was employed at Purina Feeds in Harlan (1960-1963) and Cox Grain Co. in Tennant (1963-1968). In August 1968 until August 1973, he lived in Wahoo, NE, employed as a District Manager for Trojan Seed Co. He then moved his family to Grand Island, NE where he worked as the Agronomist for Trojan Seed Co. until 1976. From March of 1976 until the time of his retirement in July 2006, John was a District and Regional Sales Manager for Moews Seed Company.

He married Barbara Louise Johannsen on January 25, 1958. To this union five children were born: Christie Schreiber (the late Dan) of Eagle, NE; Randal Eilts (Lori) of Heath, TX; Brenda Roth (Mark) of Camarillo, CA; Laurie Clark (Ed) of Brenham, TX; & Melissa Schultz (Tim) of Platte City, MO.

John was a member of the American Institute of Agronomists. He was a member of the First-Faith United Methodist Church in Grand Island, NE, and was a former member of the IOOF Lodges of Harlan, and Grand Island, NE. Some of John's favorite past-times included attending to his yard and working in his big garden and sharing his vegetables with the neighbors. An avid Husker fan, John loved all Husker sporting events. He also enjoyed the time he was able to spend with his grandchildren, especially when he could be playing pitch with them, going to their school activities, and visiting with them at every opportunity he could.

In his final days, John stated, "I've had a very good life, primarily because I had a lot of very good friends! So many people have been so good to me, helped me along the way, and I wish I had a way to thank them all!"

Surrounded by his family, John lost his short battle with leukemia on Sunday, April 16, 2017 at CHI Skilled Care. Visitation was held Wednesday, April 19 at Apfel Funeral Home with a short service at 7 pm. A graveside ceremony was held on Thursday, April 20 at 2:30 p.m. in Layton Township Cemetery in Walnut.

John is survived by his wife Barbara, their children and spouses, 15 grandchildren - Adam, Rebecca, Elizabeth & Danielle Schreiber; Jonathan (Rachel), Jennifer, & James Eilts; Nathan, Aaron & Mikaela Roth; Thomas & Emily Clark; Kevin, Garrett & Ryan Schultz, and 2 great grandchildren - Ella & Quentin Eilts. He is also survived by sisters Lois Troll (Louie) of Walnut, IA.; Edna Carl of Corning; and a brother, Ross Eilts (Linda) of Massena, along with nieces, nephews, and many friends.

Preceding John in death were his parents, Herman and Wilma Eilts, in-laws Arnold and Maxine Johannsen, brothers-in-law, Darryl Johannsen and Jeffery Carl, and his son-in-law, Daniel Schreiber.