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09/22/2012 - James S. McCafferty



Memorial services will be held for James S. McCafferty of Whitney, Nebraska on Saturday, September 22 at 2:00 pm at the United Methodist Church in Chadron, Nebraska with Reverend Adam Davenport officiating.

Jim died September 18, 2012 at Ponderosa Villa in Crawford, Nebraska three days before his 85th birthday.

Jim was born in Alliance, Nebraska on September 21, 1927 to CE and Alma McCafferty. He attended Alliance Public Schools through the end of the first semester of his senior high school year. At that time he enrolled at Chadron State College to take a semester of math and science classes while waiting to be drafted. World War II was winding down and the need for draftees had diminished so he was able to continue his education at CSC for two summers, and one fall and spring semester. He volunteered for the U.S. Army five days before the draft was ended in 1946 and spent 31 months at Fort Richardson, Alaska in the Chemical Corps. He completed a bachelor degree in chemistry from CSC in 1951.

After his discharge he married fellow science student, Naomi Howard, of Whitney, Nebraska. The couple was married on May 26, 1950 and spent the next 61 years living on the Howard Homestead where they raised four children. In October of 2011, Jim had to move to Ponderosa Villa.

Jim and Naomi farmed until Jim returned to college in the fall of 1957 to earn a teaching certificate. The following January he took a teaching job at Hemingford High School where he taught until May of 1960. He then returned to CSC to finish a master's degree in secondary science and mathematics education in 1961 and joined the college's science faculty for the fall semester. He completed work towards a doctoral degree at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, but returned to Whitney in 1964 before completing his degree to assist Naomi with caring for three young children, her elderly father and the family farm. From 1974 through 1975 he continued his graduate studies at the University of Northern Colorado. He also completed several courses from the American Chemical Society. Jim spent thirty years teaching chemistry as well as astronomy, a forensic science laboratory, and other courses in the physical sciences. During his tenure at CSC, he organized an aerospace education workshop which included a trip to Cape Kennedy for the launch of the spaceship Columbia. For this he was cited as the regional winner of the Federal Aviation Administration's "championship awards for excellence in aviation administration." After retiring in 1990 he continued his services as an educator at CSC tutoring freshman and sophomore students in chemistry for which he received the "Friend of Education" award in 1997.

Science and innovation were always a part of Jim's life. He was an eager sounding board for new ideas and always interested in the latest technology and scientific advances. He spent countless hours on his computer and ham radio meeting new friends across the globe and visiting with old ones, sharing in their lives and adventures. He eagerly shared his love of science providing demonstrations and programs to school children, assisting with science fairs and encouraging his young friends to discover the world around them.

At Camp Norwesca, not only did Jim offer programs in science to young campers, he was involved in the management of the camp and was instrumental to the fundraising for and expansion of the camp lodge. Through Camp Norwesca Jim shared his altruistic spirit and love of nature. Camping, fishing and backpacking were favorite activities of Jim's which he eagerly shared with his family and friends of all ages.

Jim was always a champion of the underdog and young people. In addition to teaching, from 1967 through 1974 he directed the college's Upward Bound program which helped to prepare high school students from low income families for a college career. He was involved in the Methodist Church's mission work in Whitney and Crawford, providing financial assistance and support to persons in need. Through the years, Jim and Naomi took many young people into their home. This was in addition to friends, family, students, community members and even strangers who turned to Jim for his kind heart and common sense approach to life. He spent many hours helping with financial, social and educational struggles of these individuals. Sometimes he just listened while other times he became an advocate on their behalf. Helping the disabled was dear to his heart as both his best friend in childhood and his wife had suffered from polio.

In Jim we have all lost a treasured friend and neighbor.

Immediate Survivors:

Wife: of 62 years Naomi

Sons: Duff (Ro) of Rapid City, SD; Marty; Todd (Carol) of Iowa City, IA.

Daughter: Shelley of Whitney, NE.

Grandchildren: 6

A soon to be great-grandchild

Sister: Marion Butcher

Nephew: Steve (Sue) Neff.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Chadron State Foundation for the establishment of a memorial scholarship in Jim McCafferty's name. Donation may be sent to:
Chadron State Foundation, 1000 Main Street, Chadron, NE 69337

Online condolences can be made at www.chamberlainchapel.com

Chamberlain Chapel of Chadron is in charge of arrangements.