



Wilbur Harter

October 5, 1920 - January 10, 2020

Wilbur Merrill Harter (“Bill”) of Des Moines, Iowa passed away peacefully in his residence on January 10, 2020. He was born in West Grove, Iowa October 5, 1920 and attended school in West Grove and Bloomfield, Iowa. He drove truck hauling limestone and other things throughout Davis County and parts of central and southern Iowa. He married Christine Curry (Swift) of Bloomfield and the two of them during WWII worked for a time in Chicago making airplane parts for the war. In 1947 they moved to Des Moines, Iowa to purchase a home and with relatives from both sides of the family purchase and operate Corty’s Cafeteria. Later this restaurant was sold and another opened in the Drake University area. Wilbur was known for his cheerful spirit, hard work, and strong constitution. For approximately 7 years he worked at Armstrong Tire and Rubber and in the evening, he sold Fuller Brush products. Later he owned and operated the APCO gas and service station on Forrest Avenue. For a time with his brother Willis he was in the transfer and storage business mainly as a driver. The warehouse was located at 3rd Street South of Des Moines’ downtown. From Martin Luther King Jr. Pkwy, you can still see the letters Rocket Transfer on the brick exterior. In his later years he was a courier for Quest Diagnostics collecting specimens from clinics around the state and taking them back to Des Moines for analysis. Wilbur loved to drive and look at the Iowa scenery especially in the spring looking at the green fields and watching the young calves jump around.

“Bill” as he was known by many also became an excellent boat driver. With the assistance of Johnny Saylor, he constructed a kit boat from Chris Craft. The family would ski on the Des Moines River and for years had a dock on Gray’s Lake. He was one of the main drivers for The Des Moines Ski Hawks where the whole family was charter members. He also helped many family and friends learn to water ski. “Bill” and Christine were avid ballroom dancers during the swing era. Both taught ballroom dance at the Arthur Murray Studios. They would often dance two and three times a week and occasionally at private home parties. They could “cut a rug”. Wilbur also enjoyed family vacations driving west and south to see the landmarks. His kids would beg him to sing his songs about big women, cowboys, smokers, drifters, and gamblers. As a youth he sang with his brother

Willis and sister Willa Mae. They were appreciated throughout southern Iowa for singing Gospel and traditional American songs in three-part harmony. Known as "The Singing Harters," they sang at pot luck socials and church events. They could have sung for a broader audience. But their mother, Bertha, would not allow them to sing anywhere alcohol was sold. Though not known for being a church goer, Wilbur's faith was always in Jesus.

Gone before him are his former wife Christine Curry (from the Swift family of Bloomfield), his beloved mother Bertha Walker (Leeps) who lived many of her later years in a house that Wilbur and his brother Willis bought for her across from Bloomfield High School, Willa Mae Henderson who spent most all her life in West Grove and was visited by Wilbur and his family frequently, and many friends from West Grove, Bloomfield, and Des Moines who could not make it to age 99.

Wilbur is survived by his children Douglas and Merrilyn who took care of him in his final years.

His heart was always in West Grove which he spoke of often and fondly. Now his ashes will be there in the cemetery behind the church of his childhood. More words could not express how much and how dearly we miss you.

Memorial services will be at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 29, 2020 at the Wagler Funeral Home in Bloomfield, Iowa. Burial will be at the West Grove Cemetery.

Cemetery

Events

West Grove Cemetery

Echo Ave

Bloomfield, IA, 52537

JAN

29

Memorial Service

01:00PM - 02:00PM

Wagler Funeral Home

304 West Jefferson Street, Bloomfield, IA, US, 52537

Comments



“ Though he wasn't my real uncle, I always thought of him as "Uncle Wilbur". Even as a kid I always looked forward to being around him and so enjoyed his welcoming smile, great laugh, and sunny outlook.

Janis Koltun - January 26 at 10:37 AM



“ He is a nice guy.I love him like my Father. Rest in peace Dad Wilbur Harter. God be with you forever. You always on our hearts

Sally Harter - January 26 at 09:41 PM



“ Very sorry to hear of your father's passing. Peace and blessings to you and your family.

Christi Hughes - January 26 at 08:49 AM



“ I remember your father as being a very good, kind and responsible parent to you Merrilyn and Doug. He was very good to you and made sure your needs were met. He had class and was very personable as well as handsome. The Lord gave him a full life and he was loved by his family. Most of all, I remember him as being very nurturing and pleasant.



Carolyn Farrell-Moody - January 25 at 04:12 PM



“ So sad to see the news of Wilbur passing. I have many memories with the help of Willa Mae, she was a gem too!! Loving family. Always think of the time she and I came to visit at Willis and Felicia's home, Wilbur would come over, had coffee and fun times visiting. Hope your family is doing good. When we travel to Des Moines I always think of you folks. God Bless you all . Your Friend always Fran Harris

Fran Harris - January 25 at 12:26 PM



“ There will never be another like Uncle Wilbur! His big laugh and his big heart were one of a kind.

Debbie - January 25 at 08:12 PM



“ When I was not very old I remember Uncle Wilbur had a race horse named “Golden Red” and he ran the county fair circuit. He took me to the horse barns at the fairgrounds a few times that made me feel like I was a “BIG SHOT”.

I also remember when Wilbur and Willis each bought brand new I believe 1955 Oldsmobile's at Mikels in Bloomfield they were so proud of those cars. Willis's was orange and Wilbur's was blue (his favorite color).

Uncle Wilbur and Uncle Willis what a team they made, then add Mom and they made beautiful music together.

I am so proud to be a part of this family.

Nephew Don Henderson

don henderson - January 25 at 08:56 PM



“ It's great to hear the details I either missed or have forgotten. And, to hear your confirmation. I feel the same way.

Douglas Chris Harter - January 26 at 07:50 AM