

In Memoriam

Duane P. Kilgus

Duane P. Kilgus, Fairbury, Ill., 88, passed away on July 9, 2023, at Fairview Haven Retirement Community in Fairbury.

He was born on June 25, 1935, in Fairbury, son of the late Herman and Marie Hoffman Kilgus. He graduated from Fairbury-Cropsey High School in 1953 and married Arlene Werner on July 24, 1955, in Salem, Ore.

Duane initially owned and operated Kilgus Food Mart in Fairbury with his brother, Richard, and then established Kilgus Farmstead with Arlene in 1958 on land purchased from his father. The Kilguses began the dairy milking 55 Holstein cows and sold milk to a local cooperative for more than 30 years. They transitioned to Jerseys because of their high components and began to seasonally graze the herd, converting 50 acres of land for corn and soybeans to 17 paddocks of rye, orchard grasses, and clover.

They built an on-farm creamery in 2009 and began bottling and distributing pasteurized, non-homogenized milk from the 160-cow Registered Jersey herd. The herd is enrolled on REAP and a Queen of Quality producer.

The Kilguses further diversified the business by raising Jersey steers, Boer goats and Berkshire hogs for meat and providing farm tours and a farm experience for customers. They also host Breakfast on the Farm each year to celebrate June Dairy Month and Grub N' Gratitude events, with proceeds from ice cream sales donated to the Fairview Haven retirement community in Fairbury.

Kilgus Farmstead is currently operated by Duane and Arlene's son, Paul, and daughter-in-law, Carmen, and their sons, Justin and Trent, and their families, and Duane and Paul's grandson, Matt, and his wife, Jenna, and their family.

Though a farming accident in 1989 left Duane paralyzed, Arlene walked faithfully by his side for nearly 34 years, and he worked tirelessly on the dairy and without complaint, setting a wonderful example for future generations. When the country store opened, he could be found tallying checkout sheets and visiting customers. Though the couple retired to live in town, they continued to work at Kilgus Farmstead, giving tours, assisting customers, and helping to prepare orders for delivery.

He was a member of the Apostolic Christian Church in Fairbury, where he served as a minister for many years. Duane's quiet, consistent example reflected his deep faith and love for his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In addition to his wife of 67 years, Arlene, son and daughter-in-law, Paul and Carmen Kilgus, and brother, Richard of Elgin, Ill., he is survived by five other children, Kent (Teri) Kilgus, Silverton, Ore., Ronda (Randal) Stoller, Fairbury, Ill., Todd (Rita) Kilgus, Tremont, Ill., Brenda (James) Fehr, Tremont, and Jason (Joy) Kilgus, Fort Wayne, Ind.; 24 grandchildren; 62 great-grandchildren; a daughter-in-law, Lisa Kilgus, Fairbury; and a sister Phyllis Nussbaum, Fairbury.

He was preceded in death by a son, Jeffery, a grandson, and two great grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to Fairview Haven Retirement Community or the South East Livingston County Ambulance Service, both in Fairbury.