

## In Memoriam

### **Gordon L. "Gordy" Ropp**

Gordon L. "Gordy" Ropp, Normal, Ill., 87, passed away April 14, 2020, at his home.

He was born in Normal on April 5, 1933, son of the late Clarence R. and Mabel Mohr Ropp. He graduated as valedictorian of his class at Normal Community High School and then attended the University of Illinois. While at college, he received his commission as a second lieutenant in the ROTC program and was a member of the FarmHouse fraternity. A day after he graduated in 1955, he married Roberta L. Cutter, a lifelong grade-school teacher.

Gordy was raised on Ropp Jersey Farm, where he began milking cows by hand at the age of six, then returned after college to raise registered cattle with his father and brother, Ray.

Ropp accepted a position as assistant director of the Illinois Department of Agriculture in 1969 and was then appointed director in 1970, a position he served until 1979. During his tenure, he established the centennial farm program and initiated development of an infrared tester to measure protein and oil content in beans. He also worked to eradicate hog cholera, a highly contagious and destructive swine disease.

He was elected to represent District 88 in the Illinois House of Representative from 1979-1993. One of few farmers in the general assembly in the 1980s, he sat in "Farmers Row" to fight for agricultural interests with his fellow representatives. He lost the November 1992 race for re-election by just eight votes to now-Senate GOP Leader Bill Brady. Ropp then served 10 years as the rural affairs liaison to the secretary of state's office, retiring from public service in 2002.

For more than six decades, Gordy was a leader for the Silverleaf 4-H Club. He received the state's 4-H Alumni Award in 1974 and was inducted into its 4-H Hall of Fame in 2005. Among his volunteer efforts was management of the 4-H Alumni Ice Cream Sundae booth at the fair each year.

He also volunteered with the Shriners, Masons, the David Davis Mansion Foundation, the Normal Rotary Club and the Barn Quilt Heritage Trail of McLean County. Ropp was a charitable auctioneer for nearly every organization in which he was involved, often kicking off the event with a corny joke.

Gordy is a member of the American Jersey Cattle Association and a former state director of the American Dairy As-

sociation of Illinois, secretary-treasurer of the Illinois Jersey Cattle Club and president of DHIA of McLean County. He was honored as Illinoisan of the Day at the Illinois State Fair in 2010 and named a History Maker by the McLean County Museum of History in 2016.

In addition to his brother and sister-in-law, Ray and Carol, he is survived by daughter Diana Ropp of Normal and son, Darren Ropp of Strawn; eight grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Roberta, in 1997, a son, David, and an infant sister, JoAnne.

Memorials may be made to the McLean County 4-H Foundation, the First Baptist Church of Bloomington, Ill., the Illinois Cancer Care Foundation or to the donor's choice.