

John James McConnell '51 C

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of John James McConnell of Saskatoon on Monday, January 25, 2016 at the age of 90. He will be greatly missed by his daughter Mary Ann, brothers George and Lorne, sister Lena Higgins, sons-in-law Bob Boehm and Darwyn Boucher, daughter-in-law Sara Gebreab, grandchildren Lyndon, Mitchell, Brianne, Ethan, John Jr., Ben and Julia and numerous other relatives and friends. He was predeceased by his wife Doreen, daughter Betty Jane and son John James Jr.

John was born in Trenta, Letterkenny, County Donegal, Ireland in the spring of 1925. He and his family immigrated to Saskatchewan 10 months later and settled on farms in Sanctuary and then in the Dinsmore area in the succeeding years. John has always known the value of education, and so, despite the financial hardship, left the farm after high school to attend the University of Saskatchewan. He graduated with an Agriculture Economics degree in 1951, embarking on a 21-year career in the Saskatchewan public service in the Departments of Co-operation and Co-operative Development and Agriculture.

During that time he developed an interest in communications after working with the province's print media and hosting the radio show Good Listening for Good Farming and the TV show Rural Route Saskatchewan. That interest prompted him to get a Master's degree in Communication Arts from Michigan State University. Later, he joined the federal public service working for Agriculture Canada in Ottawa and Saskatoon until his retirement in 1984.

John met his wife Doreen (née Ratcliffe) while playing badminton at the Regina Winter Club and they were married in 1957 (his "racquet" was not badminton but getting to know her, he joked). She shared and supported John's interest in politics, public affairs and environmentalism, his concern for the needs of the disadvantaged and his desire to create a more egalitarian society. She passed away three months shy of their 50th anniversary, but that by no means slowed down John's community involvement, social and political activism and his lifelong pursuit of learning.

He loved to talk to people, and had the uncanny knack of being able to strike up an interesting conversation with anyone, including strangers he'd just met. He was a great listener and showed genuine interest and concern for the needs of others. His farming roots showed up in his love of gardening. His backyard looked more like a tropical oasis than prairie grassland and he grew especially great-tasting tomatoes. He credited his green thumb to realizing the productive value of backyard composting.

A Celebration of John's Life will be held on Saturday, February 6 at 1 p.m. at McClure United Church (4025 Taylor St. E.). In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the McClure Place Foundation, the Saskatchewan Environmental Society or to a charity of your choice. Condolences may be left at www.prairieviewchapel.com. Arrangements entrusted to PRAIRIE VIEW CREMATION AND MEMORIAL SERVICES (306-242-7884). Funeral Home Prairie View Chapel & Crematorium 210A 33rd Street East Saskatoon, SK S7K 3S7 (306) 242-7884 Funeral Home Details - See more at:

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/thestarphoenix/obituary.aspx?n=john-james-mcconnell&pid=177522032&fhid=6657#sthash.mGvWPiMV.dpuf>