



James E. Smith Sr.

June 11, 1936 - October 20, 2025

James E. Smith Sr., age 89, of Kearney, passed away Monday, October 20, 2025, at St. John's Home in Kearney. Funeral mass will be 10:30 a.m., Monday, October 27, 2025, at St. James Catholic Church in Kearney with Father Art Faesser as celebrant. Inurnment will follow at the Kearney Cemetery. In lieu of flowers memorials are suggested to the Kearney Public Schools Foundation. Please visit www.hlmkfuneral.com to leave a tribute or message of condolence. Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl Funeral and Cremation Service is in charge of arrangements.

Jim was born June 11, 1936, at Good Samaritan Hospital to Jake and Erma Smith. At age 6 his parents moved from Miller Ne. to Big Springs Ne. where Jim completed grades 1st through 3rd. In 1945 his family moved to Kearney where he attended St. James Catholic School grades 4th through 8th, Kearney High 9th through 12th, graduating in 1954. Jim then attended Kearney State Teachers College, graduating with a B.A. degree in 1957. While in high school he started dating his neighbor Kay Lundy. They married in 1957.

Jim started teaching in 1957 at Wilsonville High School in Wilsonville Nebraska. He taught industrial arts and business for 3 years. While in Wilsonville two sons were born, Jim Jr. and David R. The family moved back to Kearney in 1960 to further his education while teaching at Kearney High

School.

Jim received his master's in vocational education and counseling guidance. In his 36 years at Kearney High, he taught machine shop and welding, woodworking, electricity, drafting and small engines. Jim was fortunate to teach in three new facilities until his retirement in 1995.

During his summers he enjoyed teaching drivers' education for 16 years. Jim was a "gun nut", loved hunting, being a gunsmith, trap shooting and woodcarving. Jim was a life member of the National Education Association and a past member of the Nebraska Education Association, Kearney Education Association, Kearney Elks #984, Charter member of the Kearney Woodcarvers and Fort Kearney Shooting Sports Association. Upon his retirement Jim completed over 300 carvings of waterfowl, songbirds and raptors.

Jim is preceded in death by his parents and his wife Kay in 2017.

He leaves behind sons Jim Jr and Dave (Missy) of Kearney; three grandchildren, Michelle Lopez of Lincoln, Brian (Hannah) Smith of Kearney and Paige (Kyle) Rademaker of Oxford; and five great-grandchildren.

Cemetery Details

Kearney Cemetery

4400 Avenue I
Kearney, NE 68847

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

OCT **27**. 10:30 AM (CT)

St. James Catholic Church
3801 Avenue A
Kearney, NE 68847

Tribute Wall

BA

“ *My deepest condolences to the family.*



Bambi - October 25, 2025 at 10:28 AM

PL

“ *I met Jim when my sister, Shirley, was a resident at Well Life in Kearney where Jim was also a resident. He became a very special person in Shirley's life, helped her get through the day. A special bond was established. Thank you, Jim, for being that special person in her life. May you Rest in Peace!*

Pat Loeffelholz - October 24, 2025 at 12:39 PM

CP

“ *I will always remember my cousin Jim as a thoughtful, creative and intelligent person who loved his family and his home, Kearney. He had a wonderful dry Nebraska sense of humor and was such fun in a conversation. Fred and I send loving thoughts to the family and know that their hearts and minds are full of comforting memories of Jim. Carolyn and Fred*

Carolyn Poetzsch - October 24, 2025 at 12:51 AM