

Gordon James Nelson, 84

Jan. 9, 1932 - Dec. 14, 2016



HARLAN – Gordon James Nelson was born on Jan. 9, 1932 in Harlan, the son of Clarence and Elsie Larsen Nelson. He attended school through the sixth grade at Harlan Community School.

On Feb. 18, 1950, Gordon married Arlene D. Petersen. Five children were born to this union: Janie Marie, LuAnn Sue, Dickie James, Johnie Gage and Jerry Jay. Gordon and Arlene later divorced. He then married Thelma Smith on Sept. 29, 2001 in Harlan.

Gordon worked his entire life as a mechanic at various places before opening Nelson Auto Service and Gordon's Repair, both in Audubon. As a young man, Gordon enjoyed racing micro midget cars and stock cars. He loved vehicles of any kind and was constantly working under the hood of a car.

Gordon had a Gold Wing motorcycle and a motor home and loved to travel. Sometimes he would drive only four miles to the lake outside of town to camp for the weekend.

Gordon enjoyed collecting toy John Deere tractors and radio controlled airplanes. He was a former member of St John's Lutheran Church in Audubon and a current member of Immanuel Lutheran in Harlan.

Gordon died Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2016 while a resident at Avoca Specialty Care. He was preceded in death by his children, LuAnn Nelson, Dickie Nelson, and Johnie Nelson; his brother Donald Nelson; and his sister Lucille Kjergaard.

Gordon is survived by his wife, Thelma Nelson of Harlan; children Janie and her husband Gregory Valdez of San Antonio, TX; Jerry Nelson and his wife Julie of Niceville, FL; daughter-in-law Teresa and her husband Mark McLaughlin of Audubon; stepchildren Tim Smith and his significant other Holly of Blair, NE; Todd Smith and his fiancé Shireen of Council Bluffs; Troy Smith of Shelby; Trent Smith of Des Moines; Traci Smith and her significant other, Mark Haynes of Harlan; nine grandchildren; six step-grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren, numerous nieces, nephews, relatives and friends. He will be terribly missed by his entire family.

A funeral service was officiated by Rev. Phil Nielsen and Rev. John Frost at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Harlan Tuesday, Dec. 20, 2016, at 11 a.m. Vocalist was Diane Kasten and she was accompanied by Heidi Theis. Serving as casket bearers were Vern Nelson, Justin Nelson, Dean Nelson, Troy Smith, Robbie Nelson, and Tim Smith. Interment burial rites were performed at Harlan Cemetery in Harlan.

Pauley Jones Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements.

Pauley Jones
FUNERAL HOME & CREMATION

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Baldwin at 9th, Harlan, IA

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