



William Yates

Grafton | Thursday, June 1 2023

William John “Bill” Yates, 85, died at 5:25 a.m., Thursday, June 1, 2023 at Alton Memorial Hospital in Alton, Illinois.

He was born in Alton, Illinois on September 30, 1937, one of four children born to the late Olen Hoyt and Margaret Mary (Brady) Yates.

Before graduating high school, he was a member of the United States Air Force Reserves and began serving with the Air Force Police in 1955.



He graduated with the Class of 1956 from Alton High School, and just ten short days later, he was in Bay Bridge, Maryland serving as a member of the United States Navy. He went on to the Miramar Naval Air Station in San Diego, California and was a part of the Vs121 fighter squadron and the vs122 squadron, until his honorable discharge on January 19, 1963.

Following his return home from the service, he began assisting his father with the family orchard, Yates Orchard, until accepting employment with McDonnell Douglas. He also worked for a period of time with Chicago North-Western Railroad as a carman welder in Clinton, Iowa.

Eventually, he returned home to Grafton, where he worked at the family produce stand for a brief period and went on to begin his long and proud career with National Marine in 1970. He started in the wheel shop, following the company through several acquisitions, and retired in April of 2001 from National Maintenance & Repair as head of the tool shop, with 31 years of service.

On New Year's Eve, 1970, he met the former Bonnie (Lair) and the two were married on February 12, 1971. Together, Bill and Bonnie ran the family orchard together, when Bill officially took over in 1986, and were proud to raise their family on the land.

Bill was a pillar in his community and would continue to run the orchard until 2010. From taking care of the trees, picking apples, running the apple polisher, driving the tractors, assisting guests and so much more, he made a lasting impact on the community. The orchard will always hold a special place in the hearts of the many families who visited throughout the years, including Bill's own family. His grandchildren were blessed with many life lessons learned and memories made during their time spent alongside Bill at the orchard.

Surviving are his wife of 52 years, Bonnie Yates; a daughter and son in-law, Cindy and Jon Pryor; two sons and daughters in-law, Joe and Shawn Yates and Bill and Debby Yates, all of Grafton; twelve grandchildren and their spouses, Hannah, Sarah, Emily, Nick, Konor, Amie, Bill, Cara, Daniel, Brandon, Bayli and Noah; as well as eighteen great grandchildren.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by a son, David Yates; two brothers, Olen and Robert Yates; as well as a sister, Lou Ann Seger.

Memorial Visitation will be held from 10 a.m. until time of Memorial Service at 12 p. m., Saturday, June 10, 2023 at Dow Southern Baptist Church, where Bill was a longtime and faithful member.

Memorials may be given to Dow Southern Baptist Church.

Memories may be shared with the family by visiting www.crawfordfunerals.com.