

Lee Kline

January 25, 1930 – January 11, 2022

Lee Kline, a noted farm broadcaster and Iowa radio personality, died peacefully of natural causes at age 91 in a Des Moines hospice Tuesday, January 11, 2022.

Born Marvin Leon Kline on January 25, 1930, he was raised on a farm just north of Conrad, a small town in central Iowa. He graduated with honors from high school in Conrad and later graduated from Iowa State University in 1951 with a degree in agricultural journalism. He married his high school sweetheart, Lila Jean Stackhouse, in 1952 and completed two years with the U.S. infantry. After a few years as a public relations specialist for the Chicago Stockyards, in 1954, Kline joined the growing farm department at WHO Radio in Des Moines, Iowa, his life-long career dream.

On the air for 41 years as a full-time farm broadcaster for WHO, Kline became known for his warm interviewing style, natural curiosity, recordings of unique sounds, and an ability to prompt heart-felt stories from farmers, families, businesspeople, celebrities, and politicians. Kline retired from full-time broadcasting in 1995 but continued his popular, weekly “Lee Kline’s Notebook” radio broadcasts on WHO and WMT (Cedar Rapids) for another 23 years until age 88 in 2018. His broadcast career spanned a total of 64 years. Kline was an avid gardener and had a lifelong admiration for trees. He was a board member of Living History Farms in Des Moines, an active member and long-time choir participant at First United Methodist Church in Downtown Des Moines, and an enthusiastic regional, national, and world traveler. With his wife, he conducted more than 30 international group tours.

He is survived by his wife of 69 years, Lila Jean, of Des Moines; sons, Douglas (Bill Venne) of Minneapolis and Gregory (Kristen) of West Des Moines; two granddaughters, Kendra (Nile) Vorbrich of Des Moines and Katherine (Francis) Nguyen of Des Moines; great-granddaughter Olivia Vorbrich; cousins; and many beloved nieces and nephews. Kline was preceded in death by his parents, Leslie and Daisy (Hudspeth) Kline, of Conrad, and sister Marlys Dielschneider of Conrad.

Gifts may be made to the Lee Kline Memorial, Living History Farms, or EveryStep Foundation/Kavanagh House Hospice. A memorial service is set for 1 p.m., Monday, January 17, 2022, at First United Methodist Church, 1001 Pleasant St., Des Moines. Arrangements are under the direction of Iles Funeral Homes.