

The James (Jim) Hughes Memorial Scholarship

James Albert Hughes (November 21, 1901- May 12, 1996) was born and raised in Brookfield Township, near Elwood and Delmar, Iowa. His grandfather, Edward Hughes, immigrated to the United States during the Irish Potato Famine. The family settled in Brookfield Township and lived in a sod house the first Winter. They also built a Catholic Church which was destroyed in the 1970s. The family also established the Hughes Settlement Cemetery in Brookfield Township.

James pursued studies in Accounting at St. Ambrose College (1922-23) but left his schooling because his father, Richard, died of cancer. He shared with his niece, Jeanne Hughes Seyller, he aspired to become an accountant. A sense of duty called him home to provide for his mother, Anna, and his two younger sisters, Agnus and Alice. So, he and his younger brother Leo tended to the the now century family farm and supported their mother and sisters.

In 1935, he left the family farm and married Marcella McCarthy in Preston, Iowa. He purchased the Lanaghan Farm during the Depression on West side of 350th Avenue. Marcella passed away in 1940. James was widowed for the remainder of his life, 66 years. In 1945 he had a farm sale and moved to Charlotte. For a brief time he worked at a local quarry but was injured. He was Charlotte's town marshal for 12 years (1946-1958). His responsibilities included setting off the Noon whistle seven days a week and maintaining the peace. While living in Charlotte, he rented a room from Mrs. Christiansen.

In the Fifties he purchase the farm on the East side of the road, now 1435 350th Avenue. Farming called him back to tend the land. He moved to the farm house on the East side of the road and farmed 260 acres with his nephew, Donald Hughes. He had a cow-calf herd, chickens, feeder cattle and hogs until his retirement in 1980. A farm accident and compound fractured leg forced him to retire.

He enjoyed playing Solo with his buddies of Goose Lake and Charlotte and reading the Des Moines Register and Clinton Herald. Favorite meals included roast beef, fried chicken or "shicken" as he would say, mashed potatoes with gravy and oyster stew which was served at O'Connors in Goose Lake during the Fall & Winter season. He enjoyed going to the horse races but bet sparingly. He lived a very frugal, simple life. The Depression of the 1930s profoundly influenced his frugal ways.

He proudly travelled to Chicago at times to see his cattle sold at the Chicago Stock Yards and marveled when his niece-in-law , Linda Hughes, would answer his call all the way from Chicago stating, "I can hear you just as plain as day." There were no cell phones...party land lines were the new technology.

He had very few worldly possessions. He wore overalls on the farm and his one Sunday suit for church and special family occasions. He enjoyed reading the daily paper and especially the Sunday Des Moines Register. He smoked a pipe and chewed Beech-Nut tobacco. He enjoyed a bit of Jim Beam. To James, his farm was his legacy. Working it and acquiring it were his greatest accomplishments... especially around the era of the depression. His land and the family that cared for him were very precious to him. I will always remember his blue eyes lighting up and and the smile that popped out behind the sound of the crinkling newspaper falling to his lap when you stopped in to visit. He would greet you with great joy...his warm voice simply stating an extended "Well....." that lingered for several seconds. It was his way of saying how happy he was to see you.

Lovingly submitted by his great niece, Jeanne Hughes-Seyller. February 2016





