



James Leo Tatro

July 31, 1949 - December 7, 2022

James Leo Tatro, 73 year old resident of Pierz, MN passed away Wednesday, December 7, 2022 at his home in Pierz, MN. A Celebration of Life Gathering will be held Sunday, December 11, 2022 from 1:00-4:00 P.M. at the St. Mathias Community Center in St. Mathias, MN. Jim's family requests no flowers be sent to the Celebration of Life, but if you would like to bring a message or photo memory to share with the family, that would be preferred. Caring for James and his family is the Shelley Funeral Chapel in Little Falls, MN.

James Tatro was born July 31, 1949. He was an energetic, hardworking farmer with a positive outlook on life. The oldest of 4 sons, he farmed with his mother and father on the family farm. He loved deer hunting with his father and brothers who said "they never pull the trigger unless they have a dead shot." Jim graduated from Little Falls High School in 1967. In 1969 he lost his arm in a farm accident, which did not slow him down. Especially after he got an artificial arm. Jim proved he could do more with one arm than most could do with two. He proved this the most when he worked with heavy equipment or was faced with any challenging work task. Jim dreamed of building his own farm, home, and barn. In 1969, he cut and sawed sturdy oak logs, took them to the sawmill, and had them sawed into lumber. He purchased 40 acres from his father, cleared the land, and started building. Over his lifetime, Jim accumulated over 300 acres where he built his farm and cultivated the land.

Jim took incredible pride over his farm as a sacred place for his family. In 1971 he married Bonnie Thielen, who loved horses. Jim's love for horses grew after Bonnie gave him an appaloosa mare she had raised and trained for him. In 1972, after purchasing Sully's Pattern, a retired Sundance 500 foundation Stallion from Lee Warne from Onida, South Dakota, he began breeding and raising Appaloosa horses. In 1972 Jim began working at Camp Ripley in the state maintenance department. He continued this position through his retirement, after later becoming the Roads and Grounds Supervisor. Through these years, Jim was a member of the Sunset Riders Saddle Club of Little Falls. He participated in countless trail rides, parades, rodeos, fairs, and horseshows. He even participated in square dancing on horseback at the Little Boots Rodeo Shows.

Jim and Bonnie's marriage was blessed with 2 lovely daughters, Jody (1978) and Jenny (1982), who are carrying on Jim's love for horses, training, showing, hunting and even using them for horse therapy. In December of 1979, a horseman from Australia came to the farm and purchased a 3-year-old stallion for their own breeding stock, making the first international sale from the barn, and putting the Tatro name on the map for quality Appaloosa bloodlines. In 1984 Jim met and married Christine Leaf who together were blessed with the birth of their daughter, Deanna (1986), and the adoption of his daughter, Tina Leaf (1976). In their union, they shared in raising their 4 daughters, Tina, Jody, Jenny, and Deanna. They spent much of their time as a family trail riding, working in the fields, harvesting wood, and caring for and having fun with their horses. Together, the family provided a place for others to learn and grow in their horsemanship and in their love of horses. Jim always found a way to make work fun, and he built a powerful foundation within all of his daughters to embrace the importance of family and hard work. Jim and Christine have continued to maintain their riding and horse farm, Rocking T Stables & Leather Shop, into their retirement years where their pride and joy stemmed from watching the enjoyment of their children and grandchildren

enjoying their horses and property. Jim was a gifted craftsman and skilled woodsman. He had many hobbies related to building and creating leather crafts. He built his first saddle for his daughter Jody in 1994. From there, he created the Rocking T Leather Shop where countless projects, saddles, harnesses, bridles, and motorcycle apparel were built and repaired. In 2021, Jim retired after 50 years from working at Camp Ripley in roads and grounds as the head of the state maintenance department.

Along the way, Jim helped many people, farmers, and horsemen. Many can say Jim helped them in some way or another. He would be the first person to plow your driveway, take down a tree, give advice, or just be a light to your darkness. Jim was always patient and willing to teach others the knowledge and skills he had for them to excel and be their best self. Most importantly, he believed in others, even if they did not. His children and grandchildren were the light of his life. He loved teaching them the ways of the farm, how to hunt, fish, and enjoy the true love of nature. He felt the most at home in the woods working and taking in God's beauty and creation.

Jim is survived by wife, Christine Tatro of Pierz, MN; daughters, Tina Cekalla of Brainerd, MN, Jody (Otto) Goldbach of Cody, WY, Jenny (Josh) Taylor of Cody, WY and Deanna (Nathan) Olson of Brainerd, MN; brothers, John (Lynn) Tatro of Little Falls, MN, Mike (Lynn) Tatro of Duluth, MN and Paul (Linda) Tatro of Pierz, MN; grandchildren, Emily Verbeck, Katie Mudgett, Dylan Cekalla, Olivia Goldbach, Adrienne Olson, Nolan Olson, Jax Taylor and Jhett Taylor; great-granddaughter, Harlyn Sypnieski and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Raymond and Beverly Tatro.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

DEC 11. 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

St. Mathias Community Center
4548 County Road 122
Fort Ripley, MN 56449

Tribute Wall



“ *Lemieur Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of James Leo Tatro*



Lemieur Funeral Homes - December 10, 2022 at 03:06 PM

LE

A beautiful tribute. I will always remember the times when I was young, and when our families would get together. There seemed to be plenty of fun shenanigans that would go on. So much laughter.... May you rest in Peace Jim. Prayers for all of the family.

Lorraine Estlie - December 10, 2022 at 07:41 PM

DO

Thank you Lorraine. He created so many fun memories with so many. We are grateful for those special times everyone has with him.

Deanna Olson - December 21, 2022 at 01:36 PM

SC

Prayers to all of you!! Beautiful tribute!! Love all the great pictures!! Hugs!!

Sheila Carter - January 02, 2023 at 04:34 PM

DO

We wanted to share an expression of our dad that we did not get to share are so thankful for everyone's support that day and now as we grieve the l

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sijH2tpBXuliy84BWkf2OU8u_ital0biusp=sharing

Deanna Olson - January 02, 2023 at 08:24 PM

BS

“ *Riley heider is a baddie*

big shlong - January 07, 2025 at 09:42 AM

DA

i agree

dave - January 07, 2025 at 09:42 AM

WA

I LOOOVE Riley heider

wade - January 07, 2025 at 09:48 AM

BI

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



bill - January 06, 2025 at 10:06 AM

BI

this is a beautiful photo

billy - January 06, 2025 at 10:11 AM

WI

william

william - January 06, 2025 at 10:13 AM

JS

“ Jim was a blessing to have in my life. Truly a one of a kind that rarely if ever comes along in ones journey of life. He always reached out to me, always seemed to call at the right time. Jim made me feel like I was important to him, he had qualities about him that i aspire to have. I will miss him tremendously, and also will carry with me a deep sadness that another like him will never come along again. God bless his family who he always spoke so highly of, may the Lord give you peace and strength. Love you Jim, thanks for everything. Jesse

Jesse Sinkel - April 17, 2023 at 04:41 PM



“ James Leo Tatro

January 21, 2023 at 11:59 AM

DO

“ We wanted to share an expression of our dad that we did not get to share during his service. We are so thankful for everyone's support that day and now as we grieve the loss of our dad.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sijH2tpBXuliy84BWkf2OU8u_ital0bERBsZKmqGG2g/edit?usp=sharing

Deanna Olson - January 02, 2023 at 03:23 PM



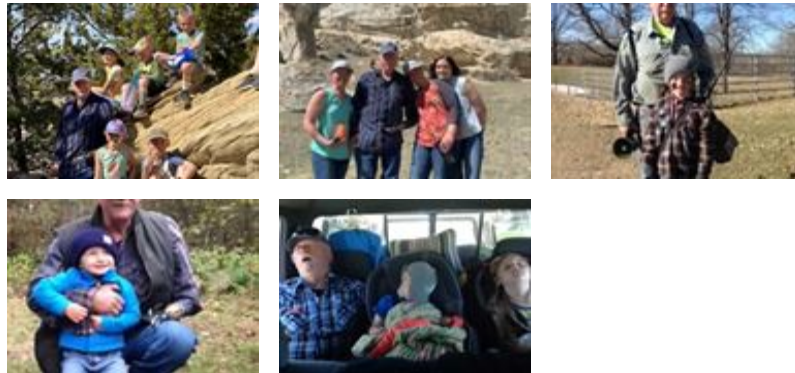
“ Judy Berger lit a candle in memory of James Leo Tatro



Judy Berger - December 10, 2022 at 09:07 PM



“ 144 files added to the album *LifeTributes*



Lemieur Funeral Homes - December 10, 2022 at 02:34 PM

YV

Jim was a special person. I ordered bill folds from him that lasted for years. He was always so kind. He will be missed always. Condolences to the family. Prayers and hugs. Yvonne

YvonneZappa - December 11, 2022 at 10:18 AM

GJ

I will always remember him the way he was a gentle man

Gloria James - December 11, 2022 at 07:15 PM

JC

“ *Christine, we are shocked and so sorry to hear of Jim's passing! We have fond fishing memories of our times together. He will be greatly missed! Take good care! JoAnne and Dean Cody*

JoAnne Cody - December 10, 2022 at 02:19 PM

DO

Thank you. I will get your message to my mom. Deanna

Deanna Olson - December 21, 2022 at 01:33 PM

JR

“ I am so very sorry for your loss and you are all in my prayers and thoughts at this most difficult time!

Judy Rossel - December 10, 2022 at 12:09 PM

DO

Thank you

Deanna Olson - December 21, 2022 at 01:33 PM

DO

Thank you.

Deanna Olson - December 21, 2022 at 01:34 PM

NM

“ Christine and Family I am so saddened to hear of Jim's passing away.I am finding it hard to find the words for comfort to all of you.So shocking and heart breaking for you.You are in my prayers.He is having some wonderful visits in Heaven with all the Angels he knows.He is an Angel now.

Nancy Marlow - December 10, 2022 at 12:22 AM

DO

Thank you. We greatly appreciate your words and support.

Deanna Olson - December 21, 2022 at 01:34 PM

AN

“ Our deepest sympathies to the Tatro family.



Audrey and George Newman - December 09, 2022 at 11:53 PM

LR

“ *Lori And Dustin Robinson lit a candle in memory of James Leo Tatro*



lori and Dustin Robinson - December 09, 2022 at 11:09 PM

SK

“ *Stacie Keehr lit a candle in memory of James Leo Tatro*



Stacie Keehr - December 09, 2022 at 10:43 PM

KK

“ *So sorry for your loss*



Ken and Kathy Kloss - December 09, 2022 at 09:04 PM

SS

“ *Sending hugs and prayers to Jim's beloved family. I have so many great memories of learning to ride horse on his farm, and listening to Jim and my grandpa Bill's stories. Jim was definitely one of a kind. ❤️*

Sara Siemers - December 09, 2022 at 07:31 PM

DO

Thank you Sara.

Deanna Olson - December 21, 2022 at 01:35 PM

C(

“ So sorry for your loss ❤️ our thoughts and prayers for you all 🙏 I have always marveled how James worked and he seem to be jack of all trades. Very impressive!! RIP cousin

Carla Hoelscher (Bue) - December 09, 2022 at 07:15 PM

DO

He sure was. Thank you.

Deanna Olson - December 21, 2022 at 01:35 PM

DD

“ Diane Drew lit a candle in memory of James Leo Tatro



Diane Drew - December 09, 2022 at 06:37 PM