

Highland , KS



David Jan Collins passed from this life, leaving it a better place, on May 14, 2023, at the University of Kansas Medical Center. Jan was born to John L. Collins, Jr. and Winifred (Morley) Collins on October 8, 1946, spending his youth on the family farm located north of Highland where the Collins family had resided since 1856. Jan grew up in a close, extended family. His paternal grandparents lived in the family home until he was 10 and his maternal grandparents lived a quarter mile down the road.

Jr. Collins was a life-long farmer and instilled in his son a strong work ethic and empathy for the less fortunate, as well as a love and appreciation for nature and the outdoors. Winifred inspired a love for learning, the value of education, as well as a sense of humor, discipline, and leadership skills. Jan was an avid hunter in his younger years and a fisherman his entire life. He believed that all of us have a responsibility to conserve our wildlife and the supporting habitat.

Jan graduated from Highland High School with the class of 1964, having participated in all sports. He was an all-area lineman in football and a starting forward on the Bluestreak basketball team of 1964 that finished 3rd in state Class B with a record of 25-1. He still holds the school record in the discus. He played first base on many teams in the area, baseball and softball (both slow and fast pitch). He was an excellent trumpet player and performed solos at school and at Highland Christian Church where the family attended.

He attended Highland Community College, participating in football, basketball, and track. A lifelong fan of the Kansas Jayhawks, he loved to boat, snow ski, and play golf, and occasionally demonstrated his skill at club throwing.

Even though education was his chosen profession, he still considered himself a farmer, and stayed active in the family farming operation. After graduating from KU, he began his science teaching career at Highland High School in 1970 and coached for several years, where he inspired discipline, character, and performance, both on and off the field. He was a competitor and loved to win, but doing your best, with character, was always of paramount importance.

He obtained his administrator- degree at NMSU and later transitioned to principal, while still teaching. He then served as the superintendent of schools of USD 425 Highland for many years. He belonged to a number of professional organizations and was chosen to serve on the Council of School Superintendents, an advisory board to the Kansas Department of Education. He finished his career as superintendent at USD 290 Ottawa and was honored by receiving the Kansas Superintendent of the Year Award in 2004.

Jan devoted many extra hours in running the business end of the school system with the goal of conserving taxpayer- funds, while still maintaining and facilitating a quality learning environment to help mold young people into becoming responsible adults. He provided teachers and staff with appropriate support and guidance. He encouraged kids to reach their full potential, while finding it was necessary to help adjust their attitude and behavior on occasion, and was affectionately known as “Doc” by many of his students.

Along the way, Jan served his community in many other capacities and organizations, including councilman and Mayor of the City of Highland and as the president of the USD 111 Excellence In Education Foundation. During retirement, he and Barbara enjoyed spending time with family and friends, travelling (cruising in particular), spending time at Lake Taneycomo and winters on Hilton Head Island. He forged many lifelong friends with other educators and travelled each year to Las Vegas with some of them and golfing trips with others. His most treasured accomplishments in life were his children and grandchildren and he enjoyed watching as they each grew and prospered. He was extremely proud of all their successes.

His life was not without adversity and his toughness and intensity is legendary. As a young boy, his appendix burst and he nearly lost his life. A life-long asthmatic, Jan knew many moments as a child when he had to fight for breath to survive. More recently, he developed Parkinson-disease along with other health problems, but he strived to continue to live life as normal as possible.

Jan is survived by his beloved wife of 51 years, Barbara (Ware) Collins, of the home in Highland, son, Shawn (Cindy) Collins, Columbia, SC, daughter, Samantha (Brian) Youngblood, Hollister, MO; grandchildren Macy, Harrison, and John Henry Collins, Dekker, Hattie, Lane and Stockton Youngblood and Savannah Miller; brother Ted (Linda) Collins, Highland, brother-in-law Charles Ware, Maryville, MO, sister-in-law Cynthia (Charles) Grooms, Parkville, MO, cousin Joy (Wayne) Meyer, Highland, and many loved nieces, nephews and cousins.

Honoring his wishes, no services will take place. Memorial donations can be made to the Jan Collins Scholarship Fund which has been established with the USD 111 Foundation and can be given to, or sent in care of, Barbara at PO Box 413 or Collins Law Office, PO Box 307, both in Highland.