

Memorial Minute for Jim Booth
(July 17, 1938 – August 14, 2016)

James Harold Booth, 78, died on August 14, 2016, in Lansing, Michigan. Jim, as he was known, was born July 17, 1938, in Baldwin, Kansas, to parents Helen Ehrhardt and Harvey Mellenbruch Booth. As a boy he developed a love of the prairies and an interest in agricultural economics, which he pursued at Kansas State University – earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Feed Technology (1960) and a Master’s degree in Agriculture and Applied Science (1962). In 1964 Jim married Kathy Gebhart, whom he had met when both were working in downtown Chicago. After six years they came to Lansing, where Jim taught at Michigan State University for several years before taking up a career selling residential real estate.

Jim was a longtime member of Red Cedar Friends Meeting, serving three terms as clerk in the 1970s. Over the decades he helped many Friends find homes in the Lansing community, and one could say without exaggeration that he helped settle Friends in mid-Michigan.

Jim was also well known in the greater Lansing community for his welcoming spirit and readiness to serve. In 1980 he assisted one of Lansing’s homeless shelters to find and purchase its current property. From that point he began to volunteer on a weekly basis with Loaves and Fishes Ministries, working the overnight shift nearly every Wednesday night for more than 35 years. Guests at the shelter loved Jim and the homemade sausage he prepared and served to them. Jim also served on the Letts Community Center Advisory Board, frequently delivered Meals on Wheels, and sang with the Earl Nelson Singers and MSU’s Choral Union. For more than ten years he volunteered as a docent at the Michigan Historical Museum, where he relished opportunities to bring history to life for visitors of all ages.

Jim was a prolific reader, and as a history buff he was particularly interested in life on the Midwestern prairie and Michigan lore. He went out of his way to engage others in discussion of current events and social trends, distributing a monthly email reviewing the books, concerts, movies, and theater productions he had seen. Jim also enjoyed travel and spending time with his grandchildren and other family.

Jim Booth is survived by his wife of 52 years, Kathryn “Kathy” Gebhart Booth, and his daughters Charlotte Harvey (Theophilis) and Tiera Graham (Kal), six grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, his sister Emily Thomas (Dave), and many nieces, nephews, and cousins.