

Larry Hilger, 61

Feb. 26, 1949 - Oct. 26, 2010

PORTSMOUTH — Larry Allan Hilger's story began in Harlan. He was born on February 26, 1949 to Donald and Madonna (O'Connor) Hilger. He was baptized and confirmed at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Harlan, attended St. Michael's Grade School and graduated from Harlan High School with the class of 1967. The next chapter in his life began when he enlisted in the United States Army where he served in Germany during the Vietnam Conflict. Larry served in the military post office at the Wurzburg, Germany Army Base. In January 1969, he was given the Soldier's Medal for rescuing a drowning girl off the coast of California in September of 1968. This is the nation's highest award given in a non-combat situation. To quote the newspaper article, "Private Hilger grabbed the girl around the waist



and held her head above water; it took him ten minutes to reach the shore with her." After receiving an honorable discharge, he returned to the Midwest where he became employed by Northwestern Bell in Omaha, NE. Larry was trained as a lineman at the Northwestern Bell School, and later worked as an installer repairman in the Omaha area. He worked in several capacities as Northwestern Bell became AT&T, U S West and later Qwest Communications. At Qwest he mainly managed part of the computer room overseeing the care and control of the long distance transmission tapes. He also became a member of the Communication Workers of America Local No. 7400 AFL-CIO Labor Union and served for several years as the Union Steward.

July 31, 1971 Larry was united in marriage to Suella Leuschen at St. Mary's Church in Panama. Two children were born to this union, Heather and Matthew. Throughout his life, Larry loved spending his free time with his family. He was a gifted storyteller who could entertain with his tales of hunting, fishing and golfing. He also enjoyed playing cards and winning at scrabble. When he wasn't watching Seinfeld, he was fascinated by the history of WWII. He loved to take afternoon drives through the Iowa countryside. His trips to Wyoming with his brothers, his sons and his close friend were some of his favorite times.

After his marriage ended, Larry continued to live in the Omaha area. He later married Deborah Sayre Mickey on May 22, 1981 in Omaha. In 2001, he decided to retire from Qwest, and the next year they moved to Portsmouth. Larry died on October 26, 2010 at Myrtue Medical Center in Harlan, eight months after his sixty-first birthday.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his son Matthew. Larry's story lingers in the hearts of his wife Deborah of Portsmouth, his daughter Heather Jennings and her husband Barry of Shawnee, KS, daughter Jennifer Dow and her husband Duane of Walnut, daughter Amy Mickey of Harlan, son William Mickey and his fiancé Hattie of Panama. Additional survivors include two brothers James and his wife Mary Hilger of Cody, WY, Dennis Hilger of Creston, and a sister Laurie and her husband Peter Clark of Providence, RI, nine grandchildren, other relatives and many friends.

Funeral services were conducted by Rev. Jeff Erlemeier at the Pauley Jones Funeral Home in Harlan, at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday, October 30, 2010. Military Rites were conducted at Iowa Veteran's Cemetery at 11:00 A.M. on Monday, November 1, 2010 with Barry Jennings, Shayn Dow, William Mickey, Jackson Jennings, Duane Dow and Mike Hilger serving as casket bearers.

*Pauley
Jones*

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