



## Leonard "Dean" Hinrichs

December 1, 1940 - January 15, 2026

Leonard "Dean" Hinrichs, 85, of Herscher IL, passed away peacefully at his daughter's home in St. Charles, IL on January 15, 2026. Dean was born in Watseka, IL on December 1, 1940, to Rita Fortin Hinrichs and Frederick Hinrichs.

Dean was preceded in death by his parents; his brother, Fred Hinrichs; his wife, Joan Wrede Hinrichs; and their son, Scott Hinrichs.

Surviving family members are his son, Leonard (Mary Herold) Hinrichs II, and grandsons, Lee and Aidan, of Mooresville IN; daughter-in-law, Dawn LeDuke-Hinrichs, and grandsons, Christopher and Nicholas, of Limestone IL; daughter, Leandra (Daniel Herbert) Hinrichs, and grandson, Konrad, of Pasadena CA; daughter, Michelle (Brian Ferguson) Hinrichs-Ferguson, and grandsons, Samuel, Quinlan and Charlie, of St. Charles IL; brother, Raymond Hinrichs, of Columbus OH; brother, Larry (Bobby) Hinrichs, of St. Anne IL; and sister, Carol (Danny Pursley) Hinrichs-Pursley, of Loda IL.

Dean grew up on a farm near St. Anne, IL. His childhood was a country boy's dream. Although they responsibilities, he and his siblings were raised "free range." There were miles of open fields and woodlands to explore, creeks to fish, and arrowheads to be found. The days were long, but often not long enough, for Dean invariably found himself caught out after dark, or waking up

pre-dawn to head out before school to check on his traps.

As Dean grew, so did his interests, particularly in athletics and music. He garnered much recognition in baseball as a home-run hitter and third baseman and was a record-setting hurdler in track. His ear for music and skill on the trombone were remarkable, earning him first-place honors at the Illinois State Solo and Ensemble Contest every year. Dean began his professional music career at age 14, performing with his brother Ray and friends. They were showcased on local radio station, WKAN, and at the Kankakee County Fair. Later, Dean joined the Blackhawks Drum and Bugle Corps, where he met other talented musicians, with whom he went on to form jazz group The Lads of Jazz (Sam Mayhew, Russ Mann, Dale Hopper, Duane Askew and Lee Melk). The “Lads” were a hit and were soon performing regularly throughout the area. A few years later, Dean joined forces with another highly skilled group of musicians - the Elmer Brinkman Band. (Elmer Brinkman, Tyke Hendershott, Dave Stone, and Lloyd Higerson). Elmer’s band was hugely popular and performed throughout Chicagoland. Dean thoroughly enjoyed his time with them but sadly hung up his horn in the early 1980s, so he could focus more on his family.

Dean’s musical career brought him much joy, but more importantly, it brought him a wife! In 1960, after a Lads of Jazz performance, Dean met the love of his life, Joan. Less than one year later, the couple was married at St. Anne Catholic Church in St. Anne. They enjoyed 62 joyful years together, which sadly ended in 2023, with Joan’s passing. They raised four great kids and have 8 handsome grandsons. They loved each other deeply and were best friends.

Prior to getting married, Dean was very fortunate to be offered an apprenticeship with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 176. Dean served 65 years in the Brotherhood and was very

proud of his work accomplishments. Among his most favorite and notable ones are, the Braidwood Nuclear Power Plant, Kankakee Community College, the Kankakee Area Career Center, and East-Court Village high-rise, which, due to circumstances, Dean ended up being the last man on the job, finishing all the wiring himself. He often spoke about that unique experience.

Dean was a good man with many loves. He loved his wife dearly and his children unconditionally. He also loved traveling. The family took at least one big trip each year, usually to Florida. After the kids were grown, he and Joan continued their love of travel by visiting more than 40 US National parks, plus Australia, Jamaica, Cozumel, Acapulco, and many other beautiful places. He also loved playing Euchre. Although the games were often feisty, they were always fun as heck. Dean loved golfing and treasured getting out on the course with his family and friends. He was a proud fisherman, with great catches from near home to the Atlantic Ocean off Florida's coast and the Canadian boundary waters.

He adored his beloved Cubbies, Bears, Bulls, and Blackhawks. He derived immense joy and satisfaction from his many home improvement projects. He was nuts about lobster, so much so that he and Joan took several trips to Maine just to eat fresh lobster for a couple of days. Lastly, Dean loved the quiet times when he and Joan would sit on the front porch at the end of a day, have a sip, and watch the sunset.

Dean knew how to treasure the meaningful moments in life. With his family and friends gathered around, he would raise his glass, smile his adorable grin, and recite his favorite seven words - "It doesn't get any better than this!" Here's to you Dean! We will miss you always and are forever grateful for the joy you brought into our lives.

A celebration of life will be held for Dean on Saturday, April 4, 2026, at Schreffler Funeral Home, 1900 W. Court Street, Kankakee IL. Visitation is from 1:00 - 3:00 pm, with service to follow. Memorials may be made to the family wishes.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Visitation

APR 4. 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CT)

Schreffler Funeral Home - Kankakee Chapel  
1900 W. Court St.  
Kankakee, IL 60901  
(815) 932-2421  
<https://www.schrefflerfuneralhomes.com/>

## Celebration of Life Service

APR 4. 3:00 PM (CT)

Schreffler Funeral Home - Kankakee Chapel  
1900 W. Court St.  
Kankakee, IL 60901  
(815) 932-2421  
<https://www.schrefflerfuneralhomes.com/>

# Tribute Wall

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“ *I have awesome memories of Dean and family , on vacations in Florida , they were always kind and welcoming... some very good times .. he will be greatly missed ...*

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**Dana Loring** - April 13 at 10:29 PM