

Charles A. Kranz, 76, of the rural Stevens Point area, formerly of Darlington, passed away early Monday morning, Nov. 25, 2019, at Portage County Health Care Center in Stevens Point.

He was born March 28, 1943, in Richmond, Ill., to Rev. Francis E. Kranz and Elizabeth (Huffman) Kranz. Within a few years, the family moved to Lancaster, Wis., where Charles grew up and graduated from Lancaster High School in 1961. He attended UW-Platteville, completing a Political Science degree in 1965, and secured a Root-Tilden scholarship to New York University Law School where in 1967 he received the J.D. law degree.

He and fellow student Carol J. Sultzman met when both were in the marching band at UW-Platteville. They maintained contact after college, Charles in New York and Carol pursuing a graduate degree in education at UW-Madison, and soon found that they wished to build a life together. Carol took a teaching job in Connecticut while Charles completed his law degree. They married Aug. 12, 1967, at First Presbyterian Church in Richland Center with Charles' father serving as co-officiant with Rev. Louis C. Stoker.

Charles and Carol relocated back to Wisconsin, residing in Shorewood, and Charles worked briefly as an attorney for Northwest Mutual Life Insurance Company in Milwaukee. He served as a federal law clerk for Judge Thomas Fairchild of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago, Ill., and then took a position as an attorney at Gibbs, Roper and Fifield in Milwaukee.

Preferring opportunities for family and life in rural southwest Wisconsin, in 1973 Charles and Carol moved to Darlington. Charles entered into a partnership with established attorney Ervin Johnson, and they were joined a few years later by attorney William McDaniel to form the law firm of Johnson, Kranz and McDaniel. Charles continued with the firm until his passing.

Charles became a member of the Lafayette County Bar Association and the Kiwanis, helping to park cars at the county fair each summer and participating in the annual pasty fundraiser of Darlington Boy Scout Troop 125.

Elected to the Darlington school district's Board of Education in 1978, he served on the school board for 24 years, 21 of those years as board president from 1981-2002. Among projects the district undertook during his tenure was consolidation of school facilities in the 1980s and construction of the new elementary school in 1996. He served on the Southwest Wisconsin Technical College Foundation Board from 1996-2010. He served on the board of the Citizens National Bank of Darlington. In 2003 he was nominated to the Darlington Mutual Insurance Co. Board of Directors; he was elected board vice president in 2005 continued in that role for more than a decade.

As a youth, Charles was active in the Boy Scouts of America, achieving the rank of Eagle Scout in 1958. He worked on the staff at Canyon Camp BSA in the late 1950s and early 1960s, where he formed abiding friendships with several of his fellow staff members and developed an appreciation for the spirit of the camp. He also participated in national jamborees and other Scouting activities. He received the Vigil Honor from the Order of the Arrow recognizing selfless service to others.

An interest in horses led from occasional horseback riding with family and friends to more concentrated pursuit of horse-drawn carriage driving for competition in the second half of his life. He became a member of the Dairyland Driving Club and the Carriage Association of America. He competed in and attended driving events in Wisconsin and around the Midwest, some events highlighting driving skill and others focusing on endurance of horse and driver. He appreciated those who could join him to participate in these activities.

He and Carol raised sheep for about 40 years on their farm a couple miles east of Darlington. He took an interest in raising the registered polled Dorset breed, was a member of the Wisconsin Dorset

Association, and for several years encouraged his children to show them at county and state fairs and other livestock shows.

Charles enjoyed sailing and golf outings with friends. He also enjoyed spending time with his family, getting together at home for holidays and projects and also at a lakeside cabin up north.

Charles was preceded in death by his brother, James F. Kranz, of Beloit and his father, Francis. He was also preceded in death by father-in-law Lawrence Sultzman and mother-in-law Winifred Jean (Johnson) Sultzman, both of Richland Center.

He is survived by his wife, Carol; two sons, David (Erin Hoy) of La Crosse, and Andrew (Sasha Case) of Winona, Minn.; and four grandchildren: Ethan, Theodore, Asa, and Margo. His mother, Elizabeth, also survives him, having celebrated her 100th birthday this year. He is also survived by sister-in-law Sue Kranz of Saukville; nephew Barry Mitchell and spouse Jenni and their children Ben and Jack, of Saukville; nephew Trent Mitchell and fiancée Tracy Mickelson of Gulf Shores, Ala.; as well as sister-in-law Patricia Nebel and spouse Gary of Sarasota, Fla.; and nephew Steve Velloff and spouse Jennifer, of Littleton, Colo.

A memorial service will be held Saturday, Dec. 7, 2019, at 1:00 p.m. at First Baptist Church (15691 County Road K, Darlington) with Rev. Nick J. McElrath officiating. A visitation will be held Friday, Dec. 6, 2019, from 4- 7 p.m. at Erickson Funeral Home (508 Main St., Darlington) and on Saturday from noon until 12:45 p.m. at the church. Online condolences may be expressed to the family at www.ericksonfuneralhome.com.

For those who prefer, a memorial fund has been established in Charles' name.