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Roger Lowry Mitchell

September 13, 1932 - June 4, 2013

Roger L. Mitchell died peacefully at home in Columbia, Missouri, at the age of 80, after being diagnosed with leukemia more than ten years ago. Roger was born in Grinnell, Iowa, to Robert Truman Mitchell and Cecile Lowry Mitchell, and grew up on a farm on the edge of town. He was the first member of his family to attend college.

Roger met Joyce Lindgren at Iowa State and they were married June 26, 1955. They were blessed to have four daughters: Laura Grace Mitchell (Minneapolis, MN), Susan Mitchell Smith (Fairway, KS and Columbia, MO), Sarah Mitchell Feyerherm (Shawnee, KS) and Martha Cecille Mitchell (Las Cruces, NM).

Sons-in-law Brian Smith, Roger Feyerherm, and Shaun Cooper and seven grandchildren: Ben and Nick Smith, Winona Vetsch, Anna and Mitchell Feyerherm and John and David Cooper are cherished family members. Nellene Martin has been a special caregiver during this time of illness.

Roger earned a B.S. in Agronomy at Iowa State in 1954 and an M.S. in Agronomy at Cornell University in 1958, after serving in the Air Force at San Antonio, Texas (1954-1956). He returned to Iowa State and completed his Ph.D. in Crop Physiology in 1961. He was offered a position there in teaching and research after completing his degree. He directed a Farm Operation curriculum with more than 500 students and advisees. He also led Iowa State students on agriculture travel courses in the United States (1962) and Europe (1964) which, he said, whetted his and Joyce's lifetime love of travel.

Roger came to Columbia, MO, in 1969 to become chair of Agronomy at the University of Missouri-Columbia, then Dean of Extension (M.U.) 1972. He left in 1975 to serve as Vice President for Agriculture at Kansas State University, then returned to M.U. to fill the Chair of Agronomy in 1981. He was asked to be M.U.'s Dean of Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources in 1983, which he did until his retirement in September 1998.

During his career as Dean of Agriculture, new funding became available that provided Roger the opportunity to lead a program called "Food for the 21st Century" that became the foundation for increased interdisciplinary research efforts in the Life Sciences. Years later, he had the wonderful experience of being present at the dedication of the new Bond Life Sciences Building on the University campus (September 2004) that he had first envisioned 25 years before.

Roger rejoiced in his family, in travel and in community service. He and Joyce enjoyed 57 years of a very special marriage. Roger was always active in the community, in the Methodist Church in many leadership positions, and with the Central Missouri Food Bank.

After his retirement, Roger and Joyce increased their international travels and created wonderful family events for their own and their extended families. Roger also increased his involvement at the Food Bank, serving on the Board, and joined the Golden K Kiwanis Club, which he very much enjoyed. He continued to be very active at Missouri United Methodist Church, and co-led an important capital campaign there in the past two years.

In lieu of flowers, Roger suggested that friends might wish to make a memorial contribution to:

- The Roger and Joyce Mitchell Scholarship in M.U.'s College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources,
- The Roger L. Mitchell Fellow Award (contact Heidi Griswold at M.U.), or
- The Food Bank of Central and Northeast Missouri (2101 Vandiver Drive 65202).

The Memorial Service, and a reception following, will be held at the Missouri United Methodist Church on Wednesday, June 12, at 3 p.m. (204 So. 9th St., Columbia, MO).

There will be graveside services and interment of ashes in the Missouri United Methodist Church Memorial Gardens and Chester Township Cemetery near Grinnell, IA, at a later time.

Online condolences may be left at memorialfuneralhomeandcemetery.com.