

James Kirk Scholarship Endowment



“Crazy J” seems like an unlikely nickname for a guy like Jim Kirk, a quiet, down-to-earth North Dakota farmer. Jim grew up on the family farm in Odessa Township south of Crary, North Dakota, with four siblings. His parents, Laurence and Arlene Kirk, taught their children the value of hard work, but they also encouraged them to follow their passions. Jim’s natural talent for working with engines proved useful when he discovered the thrill of riding dirt bikes and snow-mobiles ... fast! A sand pit at the farm became a racetrack, and Jim’s fearless riding earned him the name that has stayed with him, Crazy J.

After graduating from Crary High School, Jim enrolled in the auto technology program at Lake Region State College in 1976. He appreciated having this wonderful college so near to home. Ready to stretch his wings, Jim then enrolled in the small engines program at North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton, North Dakota. His focus was on gaining the skills he needed to succeed in farming. His parents thought it best if Jim gained experience working for someone else before returning to the farm full-time, so after college, Jim worked in a small engine repair service in Devils Lake. Then, in 1980, he began farming full-time and continued to do so through 2002. Always eager to keep busy, Jim spent winters building houses with his brother-in-law.

During one long North Dakota winter, Jim was looking for something fun to do and attended an LRSC basketball game. He quickly became a loyal Royals fan. In 1989, Jim made a pact with himself to

attend every game of the season, no matter where. Fortunately, he loved to drive, and following the team provided a destination. One dark, cold night the college's bus broke down on its way back from Ironwood, Michigan. Jim pulled up behind them, took a look at the problem, and pulled out his coveralls and tool box. He crawled under the bus, fixed the problem, and sent them on their way.

After that incident, the coaches decided it only made sense that Jim should drive the bus, and for seventeen years in a row, Jim volunteered to serve as the team's primary bus driver. He also provided mechanical advice and the "TLC" that kept college buses looking good and running smoothly. When it came time to invest in a motor coach, Jim stepped up and donated the first thousand dollars toward its purchase.

Jim was impressed with the hard work and determination shown by the student athletes who put in countless hours practicing and going on road trips and yet managed to keep up with their school work. He felt a named endowment, with preference given to female athletes, would be a nice way to continue to support the college and the student athletes who have given him so much enjoyment through the years. ■

