David E. O’Brien, 85, of Mt. Pleasant, passed away at his residence, surrounded by his family, on Saturday, May 24, 2025. He was born in Darlington, WI, the son of the late Herbert and Frances (nee: Glaser) O’Brien. Dave was generous, honest, kind, welcoming, and loved to tell a good story or joke to make people smile and laugh. It felt like he knew everyone in town and even if he did not know you, he would treat you like a long-time friend. He strived to make everything better for others and his love and commitment will forever be cherished by those who knew him.

Dave lived in Darlington until coming to Racine as a young boy. He was a 1958 graduate of St. Catherine High School. He made lifelong friends in Lake Park and was a linebacker on the football team. He was active with the alumni group until his passing, including co-chairing the class reunion four times, and always looked forward to the monthly breakfast gatherings.

As he said it, he met the love of his life, Gloria Jane Smith, at The Attic in Milwaukee in 1967. While she refused to fast dance with him at first, she could not resist his request to slow dance and “the rest is history”. On November 18, 1967, they united in marriage and enjoyed many years together, building their family and business, gardening and spending time outside, golfing, spending their vacations on the Smith Farm and visiting Wisconsin “hot spots”. Gloria preceded him in death on September 27, 2008.

Dave had three children with his first wife: David II, Tim, and Kelly. Dawn was born to Dave and Gloria and, after many years, he had the “shock of a lifetime” when Jennifer joined their family, too. He was a true family man and loved celebrating anything and everything with those he loved. He proudly attended every sporting event, concert or school function featuring any of his children or grandchildren. He boasted about having a large family and couldn’t wait for his home to be filled with his grand and great-grandchildren. He especially took a lot of pride in his Christmas and Easter celebrations and thoroughly enjoyed finding a reason to have the family gather at his house. Dave also enjoyed golfing and playing cribbage. He loved the quiet and tranquility of his home, as well as searching for deals on treasures to fill it and could tell you the purchase price of all his finds. Dave also hosted and co-hosted the O’Brien Family Reunion for decades and could always be seen at the check-in table acting as the “Chief, Cook, and Bottlewasher” of all the day’s events.

Many know Dave through his upholstery business, O’Brien’s Upholstery. He learned this trade from George Weidholz, Sr. when he was in high school and worked with him for several years after H.S. graduation. He started O’Brien’s Upholstery in 1970 and retired in 2020, celebrating 50 years of business. He said he liked working with his customers the most and felt very proud about how good things would look when completed. He was gifted in this trade and was “particular” at getting things right (patterns, buttons, etc.).

Dave was a very hard worker and great at networking and building up communities of like-minded individuals. Dave also drove truck at Frito-Lay for 5 years after high school (which arguably started his deep love of potato chips) and was a projectionist, showing movies at the Venetian and all the other indoor and outdoor theaters in Racine in order to supplement the start of the upholstery business. He joined the projectionist union and served as President, as well. He joined the Point West Business Group around 1975 and served as President three times, Vice President three times, and was on the Board of Directors for 20 years. He gained many long-term friends through this organization and loved the opportunity to volunteer or raise money for important causes.

Later in life, Dave enjoyed the company of his close friend, Karen Verbeten, who he reconnected with through the St. Catherine’s high school reunion committee. They traveled to Ireland, Germany, Poland and other sites in Europe. They enjoyed driving across the country to find warmth and visit with family and friends, attending concerts and plays around town, and going out for Friday Fish Frys.

Surviving are his children, David (Wendy) O‘Brien, of Kenosha, Dawn Erickson, of Racine, and Jennifer (Geoff) Streator, of Sun Prairie, WI; grandchildren, Jessica, Melinda, David III, Nathan, Joshua, Matthew, Rachel, Miles, Penelope; great grandchildren, Karmyn, Millie, Lilian, Kyna, Kyra, Kyla, Myra, Joshua II, David IV, Nolan, and another great-granddaughter to arrive in July and a great-grandson, to arrive in September; five brothers, Duane (Ginny) O’Brien, of Merrill, WI, Richard (Alice) O’Brien, all of Racine, Dan ( Rosemary “Tyke”) O’Brien, of Montello, WI, Dennis (Priscilla Shih) O’Brien, of Racine; sister, Darlene Tanner, of Racine; special friend, Karen Verbeten. Numerous nieces, nephews, other relatives, and a host of friends also survive him. In addition to his parents and beloved wife, Dave was preceded in death by his, granddaughter, Lucy Streator, great-granddaughter, Savannah Manriquez, brother, Dwight O’Brien, sister-in-law Pat O’Brien, brother-in-law Ed Tanner, sister-in-law, Dorothy O’Brien, nephews, Rick and Perry O’Brien, niece Susan O’Brien, and best friend and golfing companion, John Holbus.

The family wishes to extend their gratitude to Home Instead and Heartland Hospice for the care they provided to Dave and the family.