

James L. Connolly
Modern-era Ranching

James Louis Connolly was born May 11, 1912 at the family home in Dunn Center, ND. In his early years, James lived and worked on the Two Bar Ranch at Dunn Center. During the winters of the 1930's and 40's, he also worked at the cow cap on the Little Missouri River, later purchasing the Al Buchle ranch at Golden Valley, ND. He eventually had 10,000 head of cattle between the two ranches.

James joined his father, William C. Connolly, in forming the ND Stockmen's Association in 1929, and remained a lifetime member having held terms on the Board of Directors and as president. Conelly also served on the ND Farm Bureau (Director), the ND Hereford Association, ND Beef Council (President), National Cattlemen's Association (Director). He was on the Board of Advisors of Assumption College, Richardton, and on the board at Dickinson State College. In addition, James was a charter member of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame as well as the North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame.

James was honored with the ND Stockmen's Association Top Hand Award in 1989.

He served in the ND Legislature for the 33rd and 48th districts and spoke with ease about government encroachment, imported beef, consumer demand, juvenile delinquency, and exchange programs between city and rural youth (excerpted from an article by Paul Rosenfeld, included in nominee binder).

In a 1993 letter to James' wife, Phyllis, Ron Abrahamson (Horizons Magazine's first Editor) asked if he might have a memento to remember James. He wrote, "Big Jim was a real special kind of hero...I remember thinking 'By God, that's how a real cowboy walks and talks and does things'". Mrs. Connolly sent Mr. Abrahamson James' "last good hat". (The written exchange between Mr. Abrahamson and Mrs. Connolly can be found in the nominee binder, and tells a greater story than can be represented in this short bio.)

James L. Connolly died in Bismarck, ND on August 5, 1989.
