



James "Jim" Joseph Beckett

June 27, 1922 - May 29, 2020

A public mass to celebrate the life of Jim will be held at St. Francis Catholic Church and announced at a later date.

James J. Beckett, age 97, of Traverse City, passed away at 5:08 a.m. May 29th just where he wanted to be - at his home of 59 years on Apache Pass. He is now reunited with his bride Dorothy Alice and their twin baby son Robert James. Jim was the sixth of seven children born to Robert H. and Elizabeth (Maus) Beckett on June 27, 1922 in Bay City, MI.

'Little Jimmie' was industrious, outgoing and full of mischief from the day he was born. At the age of six, Jim took over his older brother's Bay City Times paper route and began buying candy bars wholesale. With his newspaper bag balanced on his head, and his wagon loaded with Baby Ruths, Tootsie Rolls and the ever popular Clark Bars, Jimmie began his sales career. He developed a loyal customer base and initiated a charge account system. He sold Liberty Magazines for a nickel and hustled Christmas cards during the holidays- always warning potential buyers that he had only one box left. The Beckett boys charged neighborhood kids to watch them reenact the Lindbergh baby kidnapping in their garage theater. Props included a rickety ladder and one of their sister's big dolls. Jimmie was proud that the money he earned each week became his mother's pin money.

Jim attended St. Boniface, graduated from Bay City Central High School and Bay City Junior College, all with honors; and, fortunately, without harm - a significant possibility considering his habit of jumping onto the Bay City Bridge as it swung open above 600-foot freighters plying the Saginaw River.

WWII altered Jim's college plans (Nevertheless, Go Blue!). He joined brothers Robert and Thomas in the trenches. After landing on Omaha Beach, Jim was deployed as a Technical

Sergeant to an anti-aircraft division. Thirty-eight months later he returned to America on a leaky Liberty ship, spending time on the rail with Mickey Rooney. They debated. Would the ship sink before or after they died of sea sickness?

Home from the European front, Jim was hired by the Michigan Bell Telephone Company management training program for \$35 a week. It took about five minutes for him to notice Dorothy Glick at Bell's Saginaw Office. He asked her out for a movie at the Temple Theater. Four evenings later, approaching the Glick porch to pick up Dorothy, Jim was startled by Butch, the large family dog. Back in the car, Jim honked. Dorothy's mother barked back. No daughter of hers was going anywhere with a man who did not come to the door. Six months later, Jim proposed to Dorothy in the Big House during halftime of the Michigan-Northwestern game. The game ended in a tie but the marriage was a winner.

In 1951, Jim and Dorothy moved to Traverse City, where Jim was named the area manager for Michigan Bell. Jim oversaw the installation of equipment and telephone poles throughout the Grand Traverse region, the transitions from party to single lines, from manual operators ("Number please") to rotary dials and touch tones. Jim introduced visiting actor Pat O'Brien to direct long distance service by helping him place a call to Mrs. O'Brien in Hollywood, CA. In 1972 Jim was promoted to District Commercial Manager, responsible for area services from Clare to Sault Saint Marie.

After removing just one shovelful of dirt at the Northwestern Michigan College ground breaking ceremony, Jim was hooked on the vision of local college opportunities. He raised awareness and funds for every NMC millage election, capital campaign and fund drive. He was elected to the NMC Board of Trustees and served for 32 years as board chair. Upon his retirement, Jim was installed as an NMC Fellow and Emeritus Member of the NMC Foundation. The business building on campus was named the Beckett Building in his honor. Jim and Dorothy frequently walked around the Building to make sure none of the letters had fallen off.

In addition, Jim was active in the Traverse City Chamber of Commerce, over 30 years as chairman of the membership committee. Such a committee might conjure up tedious meetings. That would be a misnomer. Past committee members vividly recall the spilling of blood, ruthless conniving and surreptitious moves; all good fun for the purpose of selling memberships and building a strong regional business network. Jim is the only individual to be awarded the Chamber's Distinguished Service Award twice, in 1960 and again in 1993.

As Traverse City's longest serving Rotarian, Jim wore badge #1 earned by decades of

service to the community he loved. He even sang about it- a regular performer in the annual Rotary Show, he offered his rendition of "T. C. My Kind of Town," his exuberant stage presence overshadowing his limited god given musical talent. Jim chaired the Rotary Crippled Children's Committee (now renamed the JJ Beckett Access-ABILITY Committee.) For years on Tag Day, Jim and his children would be at the corner of the Post Office collecting donations to support the needs of differently-able citizens in the community.

Since 1952 Jim has been a member of the leadership teams charged with finding the financial resources to build the original St. Francis elementary school, gymnasium, high school, new church and the recently completed Immaculate Conception Elementary School. His faith was strong. "Jim was always ready to pray and was excited to receive the Holy Eucharist," said Deacon Rene Hoenscheid, who visited Jim each week since Dorothy passed away nine years ago. "I enjoyed our visits and prayer; Jim always kept the Lord in his heart."

Thus, after an opening prayer, Jim would shout "Give me G...L...A...D...S....." and everyone shouted back with equal enthusiasm. Since its inception in 1983, Jim has coordinated the annual Gladhander gala, raising over six million dollars for the Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools (GTACS). The Beckett competitive spirit grew the associated raffle blitz into a legendary success. Fair warning: his 'call list' lives on.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, there was backyard croquet, badminton and gourmet grilling. The family caught perch in Long Lake, water skied on Glen Lake, played shuffleboard, pool and ping pong in the basement. During fierce nickel ante poker games, Grandpa schooled his grandchildren in smart plays as well as the infractions that could cost you an arm in Vegas.

There was truth to the cautionary tale, 'Hold on to your wallets, here comes Beckett.' The entire region has benefitted from his tenacity. In every venue, be it the National Cherry Festival, the Osteopathic Hospital Development Campaign, Twin Lakes Camp, or Leadership Grand Traverse, Jim's can-do attitude was outmatched only by his deep affection for volunteers and donors who stretched themselves without needing too much convincing. Jim's grandson once observed, "Grandpa makes people so excited about contributing that they give more than they planned!"

Making people feel a part of something larger than themselves was Jim's talent and he used it generously. He loved every minute of it. It could be said that Jim was not a man of

wealth. But we disagree. The joy he shared with community friends, church and family amount to a legacy beyond measure.

Jim was interred next to Dorothy at the Grand Traverse Memorial Gardens on Thursday, June 4th. They rest together in plots he won as the highest bidder at the 2003 Gladhander auction.

Memorial services will be held at a later time when we can all be together.

Jim is predeceased by his parents, his wife Dorothy, baby son Robert James, son-in-law Dr. Matthew A. Houghton, Jr., brothers, Robert and Thomas Beckett, sisters, Helen Schwartz Peterson, Jane LaBerge, Isabel Tocks MacDonald, and Patsy Gerard. He is survived by his children Barbara Ann Houghton, Carolyn (Peter Coppelman) Beckett, Janice (Steve) Duddles and James (Nora) Beckett, his beloved grandchildren Alexander (Brandi Dickey) Beckett Coppelman, Dr. Elizabeth Beckett Coppelman and the nieces and nephews who cared so much.

The family would like to thank Dr. Klettner and Nurse Amy, the Dr. Kozelko team, Comfort Keepers Melanie, Sue, Summer, Fern and Alexandra; Munson Home Health Oksana, Mark, Lois and Tammy; Munson Hospice Deb, Debbie, Angie, Pat.

Kindly share thoughts and memories with Jim's family at <http://www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com> or Jim's home at 1749 Apache Pass, Traverse City, MI. 49686

Memorial contributions in Jim's honor may be directed to the GTACS James and Dorothy Beckett Service Scholarship Fund; the JJ Beckett Access-ABILITY Rotary Committee; the Northwestern Michigan College James and Dorothy Beckett Scholarship Fund; the The Dream Team (EIN 83-2279100) an area-wide co-ed baseball league for players with disabilities.

<http://www.Dreamteamtraversecity.com>

All contributions c/o of Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home, 305 Sixth Street, Traverse City, MI 49684.

Jim and his family are in the care of the Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home and Cremation Services.

Cemetery

Grand Traverse Memorial Gardens

3575 Veterans Drive

Traverse City, MI, 49684

Comments



“ Such fond memories we have of the Beckett's as neighbors on Apache Pass. We moved in with 4 young, loud children and he and Dorothy were the first to welcome us with a wonderful blueberry pie. As the years went on we helped when we could and always enjoyed Mr. Beckett's visits. He would give that big smile when one of our kids 'acting up' or told me 'not to worry about it, kid' when I felt I needed to apologize for the children's playful shrieks as they played outside. Our family was honored to have known him and our thoughts are with the entire family.
Paul, Marcy, Vincent, Nicholas, Stella and Julia Ellul

Marcy Ellul - June 11, 2020 at 10:06 AM



“ My dad spoke so highly of your father over his years with Michigan Bell Telephone. Dad was always sure your dad hated to see Fridays come during the summer when Harry Lawford would always be in the north as his family was at their cottage on Glen Lake. :)
Thinking of you all,
Anne Lawford Krawczak
Glen Lake

Anne Lawford Krawczak - June 10, 2020 at 01:22 PM



“ To the Beckett Family, I feel honored to have known your dad, I always felt it was a privilege and a honor to pick him up for the Glad's home football games and bring him up to the press box when my own father was not available to do so. He will be missed by all that I am sure!! Traverse City and the community have lost a legend! I hope to run into him in my next life! Maybe we can sit together and watch a football game or two. God bless all of you! Sincerely the James Tenbusch Family

James F Tenbusch - June 10, 2020 at 12:53 PM



“ To the many members of Jim Beckett's family, I send greetings and condolences on the loss of this great man. Wow, what a life, what a legacy! Let me introduce myself, a former neighbor of his parents, James. M. Gates. I was raised just south of where they lived at 10th/McLellan St. in Bay City. I knew by sight only Jim's sisters Helen and Pat and then, mostly from seeing them at St. Boniface church where my family were also members. I remember vividly, Jim's dad, Robert, attending a lot of sporting events at Bay City Central High School. I am deeply sorry for your loss. May God bless and keep you all in the hollow of His hands.

Jim

James M. Gates - June 10, 2020 at 12:00 PM



“ Well done good and faithful servant..... Thanks for all that you did while on this earth. My prayers for Jim's family. Jim's smile gave light to all.

Darlene Miller



Darlene A. Miller - June 08, 2020 at 12:29 PM



“ mr. B. So sorry to hear of your passing!! I worked at MBT 30 years and have many memories of you as my manager. You were always so “upbeat” and cheering on all of the service reps!! You watched our sales skits many times!! May you rest in peace

Judy Aeschliman - June 05, 2020 at 01:15 PM



“ One of the giants in TC is now looking down on all of us. Hoping that the example he gave each of us continues in our community. Jim was one of the most caring, thoughtful, compassionate, friendly, and dedicated people I have known. He always had a smile and a nice word to say, no matter what! Since I moved out of TC I have thought of Jim many times and his wonderful smile and caring personality. My prayers go to Barbie and the rest of the Beckett family. RIP Jim.



Kathy Greene - June 04, 2020 at 05:48 PM



“ To know Jimmy Beckett is to love him! Jimmy has touched so many of our lives in TC. He was an incredible blessing to all us. His infectious smile, love for people and dedication to TC was amazing. He had a servants heart and lived Jesus's new commandment “to love one another”. He will be sorely missed. He is now in the loving arms of Jesus. And Christ saying well done my good and faithful servant.

David Mann - June 04, 2020 at 11:06 AM



“ Suzanne is following this tribute.

Suzanne - June 03, 2020 at 02:46 PM



“ Dear Cousins: So sorry to hear about Uncle Jim. I have such good memories of him.
Love, Susie LaBerge

Suzanne - June 03, 2020 at 02:42 PM



“ Sir James: you are a giant in the all of those who proceeded you. In your early profession and after you were the top of the class and top of my Telephone Pole (ATT) It was a true honor to meet a man with great humility and leadership that shared his family, friends and religion as with of his most concern. Your ability to lead in and assist so many civic and religious organizations is legend. May your leadership be learned and shared with those of the young leaders that follow you. It was my great honor to have known you, John Hartl Jr.

John L. Hartl Jr. - June 03, 2020 at 10:37 AM



“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



Jerry Martineau - June 02, 2020 at 12:27 PM



“ Heaven gained a giant. Jim was a giant in all ways except stature. Anyone who met Jim had to feel there was just something "special" about this guy. He was warm, charming, kind, witty and caring. On the other hand he could be firm and very persuasive. His involvement in the community,GTACS, College and,St. Francis Church is legendary. Jim lived a long and full life and touched numerous people. As his former Pastor, I may on a rare occassion have disagreed with him, but I always felt he respected my opinion and more importantly, respected me. This, I'm sure, was the feeling of all who knew Jim Beckett.

I can't recall a single Sunday when I did not see Jim and Dorothy at Mass. They prayed together, they stayed together. Both had a tremendously positive effect on the community and certainly on the parish. Jim was not merely a member of a church, Jim was part of the fabric which made the parish a dynamic family of God.

The last time I saw Jim, was a few years ago when we both met up at the cardiologist's office. He was frail but had that ever charming smile about him. We had an opportunity to speak, catch up on some old memories and then his doctor came over to Jim, shook hand (before Covid 19) patted him on the back and said: "Come with me, Jim." OK, so the rest of us had to wait our turn, but Jim deserved that bit of extra special treatment. It seemed everyone wanted, in some small way, to give back to a man who had given his all for his God, his family, his friends and his beloved community. May the soul of Jim Beckett and all the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.

Fr. Ron



Ronald V. Gronowski - June 02, 2020 at 07:44 AM



“ There are two kinds of people in this world....the givers and the takers. Jim was the ultimate giver! I was honored to work with him on the Gladhander for many years and admired his caring and integrity and his love for his fellow man. He made this world a better place for 97 years.

Sherry Schmalenberg - June 02, 2020 at 07:40 AM



“ It would be difficult to find a person with a more upbeat, giving, "can do" attitude. I am honored to have worked with Jim in many endeavors over the years, especially in his leading role at NMC. There are not many leaders who have achieved as much as he did for his community.

Roberta Teahen - June 01, 2020 at 08:01 PM



“ Jim and Dorothy Beckett did so much for people with disabilities in our community. Thinking of Jim's family. His life was THE definition of a life well-lived. With gratitude,
Susan Odgers

susan odgers - June 01, 2020 at 02:20 PM