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James Joseph Putkey



1931 - 2023, Resident of Moraga

James "Jim" Joseph Putkey was born at home in Richmond, Calif. in 1931, and died peacefully at home in Moraga, Calif. on Feb. 14. He is survived by his loving wife of 63 years, Angela, their three daughters and sons-in-law, Jacqueline and Tony Hill, Joanne and John McClellan, and Paula and Chris Kenny, their four grandchildren, Grant, Laura, Pete and Brian, and a multitude of nieces, nephews, grandnieces, and grandnephews. Jim is preceded in death by his parents, John and Anna, and his five brothers, Herbert, John, Charles, Thomas, and Edward.

Jim grew up in Richmond playing stickball in a vacant lot, fishing and swimming in the Bay, and helping his mother cook Slovakian meals. In high school, he enjoyed illustrating school publications and playing football, later becoming a dedicated fan of local high school and college football teams and working the "chain gang" at Campolindo football games. After graduating Richmond Union High School in January 1949, Jim worked for a year and a half as a merchant seaman on a Standard Oil tanker ship to earn his college tuition. Jim attended Santa Clara University, earning a Bachelor in Civil Engineering in 1954. After graduation, he served in the U.S. Army for two years, stationed in Germany.

In 1956, Jim began his professional career as a Civil Engineer with Bethlehem Pacific Coast Steel Corporation

where he oversaw the steel construction of many bridges and buildings throughout California and Oregon, including the Feather River bridge, Oakland's Kaiser building on Lake Merritt, San Francisco's Alcoa building, and the Century Plaza Towers in Los Angeles. After Bethlehem closed its West Coast offices, he joined the University of California in the Office of the President for seven years, then started a business as a private Construction Consultant, which he ran for 30 years. He retired at age 81.

Although Jim worked hard, his proudest accomplishment was his family. He met Angela at a Catholic social mixer, and in 1959 they married at St. Leo's Church in Oakland. They moved to Moraga in 1963 to raise their family. Jim liked to take on any house or yard project, usually with success. He was an active father to his daughters, flying kites and hiking in the hills, cooking breakfast, and singing lullabies at night. He was a proud grandfather who treasured every minute he could spend with his grandchildren, whether it was babysitting, reading books, playing games, attending sporting events, or volunteering at Boy Scout camp.

Jim was a "people person" who could strike up a genial conversation with anyone, and he was a steadfast friend to old and new acquaintances alike. He enjoyed being part of the St. Monica Catholic Church community as a member of the Parish Council and the Men's Club, and as the Charter Organization Representative for Boy Scout Troop 234. He was a lifelong artist, designing holiday cards and perfecting his specialized pun art. Jim was known for collecting and repairing Oriental rugs, playing a sharp bridge game, and being an avid storyteller. He was also known around town for his fashionable walking stick and straw hat.

Jim had a strong faith in God; he lived an honorable life as a dedicated husband, father, grandfather, uncle, granduncle, and friend. His dry wit and generous spirit will be greatly missed.

A Funeral Mass will be held on Thursday, March 30, 2023, at 10:15 a.m., St. Monica Church, 1001 Camino Pablo, Moraga, CA, 94556 with a reception immediately following in the St. Monica Peace Center. During this reception, family welcomes written or shared stories and memories of Jim to celebrate a life well-lived. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to:

Hospice East Bay (925) 887-5678, <https://www.hospiceeastbay.org/donations> or to John Muir Cancer Research Center <https://www.givehealthjmh.org/cancernetwork>

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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