



## James E "Jim" Sayer

September 11, 1946 - July 12, 2020

James Edward "Jim" Sayer, 73, with his wife, Cathy, and their children by his side, let go of earthly ties and ran into the arms of his Savior, Sunday, July 12, 2020. He was born on September 11, 1946, in Johnson City, NY. Jim was a Mickey Mantle-loving New York Yankee fan who played baseball in the park all day and stick ball under the street lights, until his mother called him in. The summer of his junior year in high school, his family moved to Sierra Vista, AZ, where Jim graduated from high school.

Jim continued his education, earning an Associate of Arts degree from Cochise College, a BS in Social Science Education from Northern Arizona University, a MA in Speech Communication from University of Arizona, and a PhD in Rhetoric from Bowling Green State University. Jim's career spanned 40 years in higher education, 36 at Wright State University (WSU) in Dayton, OH. He taught speech, rhetoric, media, history, and political science; chaired the Department of Communication for 18 years, served as president of the WSU Faculty for eight terms, and was Dean of Lake Campus his last three years before retiring. He also hosted a weekly public affairs program on WPTD, which received a Regional Emmy, in 1986.

Outside of work, Jim had a passion for softball and played three-seven games a week, well into his 60's. Having played college golf, he also enjoyed that game until his last year of life. He coached his children's tee-ball, softball,

basketball, and soccer teams; was as an elder at Kirkmont Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) in Beavercreek, OH; served many nonprofit organizations as board member, parliamentarian, or event host; and was always on hand to assist at the many university-community events facilitated by Cathy in her role as WSU Director of Service-Learning. After moving to Wenatchee, WA, in 2018, to be nearer children and grandchildren, he also served on the finance team at Saddlerock EPC and the board of Serve Wenatchee Valley.

People who knew Jim best, saw beneath his quick witted, sometimes crusty exterior to his humble, generous servant's heart. He knew the names of grocery cashiers and the custodians who cleaned his office, as well as those of the university president or the mayor. As Dean of Lake Campus, he was even known to shovel snow off the sidewalk to the classrooms. He had a soft spot in his heart for cats and could not help himself from feeding strays. He delighted in giving the neighbor boy a soda every time he wandered into the yard and loved to take friends and family out to eat and pick up the tab. Jim was extremely proud of his family and regularly expressed his affection for them, checking in on his kids with phone calls and always being sure to tell them, "I love you a bunch."

In addition to his wife of 52 years, Cathy (Wilson), Jim is survived by two daughters: Lara Sayer (Cory) Young of Alexandria, VA, and Rev. Annie (Joel) Rose of Wenatchee, WA; two sons: James Robert (JoAnn) of Portland, OR, and Stephen Edward (Karine Hermes) of LA; five grandchildren; his mother-in-law, Peggy Wilson; four sisters-in-law; and 11 nieces and nephews, and their families. Jim was preceded in death by his father, Edwin James; his mother, Ruth (Ferry); his father-in-law, Harold Wilson; his brothers-in-law: Tommy Wilson, Roy Gentner, and John Dolaghan; and his niece, Caitlin Dolaghan.

A Celebration of Life will be held at Saddlerock Evangelical Presbyterian Church, 1400 S. Miller St., Wenatchee, WA, at 3:00 p.m., on September 11, 2020.. In lieu of flowers, gifts may be made to Serve Wenatchee Valley, P.O. Box 5543, Wenatchee, WA, 98807; or to the Jim Sayer Endowed Scholarship on the Wright State University Foundation's website or sent to Colleen Lampton-Brill at Wright State University Foundation, 3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy, Dayton, OH, 45435 (checks payable to Wright State University Foundation.)

# Tribute Wall

HS

“ Nearly 50 years ago, I meant Jim and the newly formed department of communications at WSU. Bob Pruett and Bill Rickert were new key faculty. Having just finished time with USMC I was taken taken in by Jim and Jack Whippen. my economics professor. Together they taught me how to think, clearly write, and to pursue academic excellence. Looking back it was like the Eddie Murphy and John Akroyd moving Trading Places as they took a farm boy who later became a global consultant, an author, and a college professor. Jim generously guided and shared his zeal for life. Bountiful blessings from all that you touched  
Herb (Tomas) Stevenson

Herb Stevenson - April 15, 2025 at 09:38 AM

PE

“ I got “B”s instead of “A”s from Dr. Sayer. It was my own fault! I was a horrible note taker. Instead of writing down the important points for the test, I wrote down the jokes. What a guy! 💜



Pat Everling - September 11, 2020 at 10:42 AM

AB

“ Jim was the best mentor and friend in school, the workplace, and in life that anyone could ever wish for. I can't believe the world is without his remarkable sense of humor and good will. We first met when I was hired to be his co-host on a TV show called FOCUS in the early 1980s. He made every single day at that job fun no matter what was going on. He later became my teacher and advisor while a student, and years later, became my chair, hiring me to teach for the WSU Communication department (my first full-time teaching job!). I loved working with him as a faculty member and seeing how much he was admired by students, faculty, and administrators alike. When he left for the Lake Campus, I was devastated. But I knew he would be an awesome leader there and, indeed, the Lake campus truly benefitted from his leadership. We connected on and off every few years after that--mostly when I needed his advice on a career move or other such thing. He was always there to lend a hand when you needed him -- so gracious, fun-loving, and willing to do whatever he could to help or make you feel better. Much love and prayers to Cathy and all the kids -- Ann Biswas

---

**Ann Biswas** - September 02, 2020 at 10:34 AM

CS

*Thank you, Ann. I love reading about Jim through the eyes of those he touched, and he certainly enjoyed working with you as well.*

*Love to you and your family,  
Cathy*

---

**Cathy Sayer** - September 03, 2020 at 08:09 PM

LC

“ Jim Sayer and I were graduate students together in the early 70's. He was a good friend and mentor with a tremendous intellect and a wonderful sense of humor. Whether in a doctoral seminar or on the intramural softball field, "the Cowboy" was a true leader. He is one of those rare individuals you meet in your life who makes a real difference. When my wife was ill he helped us meet and overcome the many challenges we faced. We were fortunate to know him.

---

**Lawrence Chase** - August 27, 2020 at 08:00 PM

CS

Larry! It is so good to hear from you! Thank you for these sweet words! I would love to be in touch and hear more about your life. My very best to you!

---

**Cathy Sayer** - August 30, 2020 at 10:06 PM

LC

Hi Cathy, my sincere condolences. Yes of course it would be great to get back in touch. We have decades worth of stories to share.

---

**Lawrence Chase** - September 02, 2020 at 11:29 PM

CS

If you are on Facebook, send me a friend request or a private message in Messenger.

---

**Cathy Sayer** - September 03, 2020 at 08:15 PM

MM

“ Jim could win the most genial person and the gruff person awards both at once. He had such a great sense of humor and a warm smile. He was no fan of bureaucracy, of unnecessary hurdles, or of people taking themselves too seriously. He brought a lot of humility to his work—unusual in academe, perhaps—and a lot of compassion. He made me welcome at Wright State and I knew that he was always there for me. The two of you together have been such an inspiring couple—giving so much to one another and so much to others—I cannot think of one of you without thinking of the other so you are often in my thoughts. Lots of love, Margie

Marjorie McLellan - August 19, 2020 at 11:22 AM

CS

Thank you, Margie! Such sweet thoughts! You nailed Jim, especially his intolerance toward bureaucracy!

Cathy Sayer - August 24, 2020 at 08:40 PM

GS

“ Although we had lost touch the past few years, I considered Jim a true friend. I remember Jim, along with Cathy and their children, sitting in the pew in front of us faithfully for many years. Jim had many one-liners I'll hold close to my heart. Jim's love and humor shined. I have fond memories from the time Jim emceed and roasted me at my 40th birthday party. He often encouraged Cathy and I to meet up for breakfast and supported our friendship. He truly loved cats and routinely renamed my cat "Snowball" when her name was really "Sugar." He even renamed me "Cookie," and I considered it a term of endearment. Jim was a wonderful man who contributed in large and small ways alike. Jim was truly a gem.

Ginger Smith - August 13, 2020 at 10:44 PM

CS

*Thank you, Ginger! I miss you and those breakfasts so much!*

---

**Cathy Sayer** - August 24, 2020 at 08:41 PM

JO

“*Jim Sayer was my advisor at Wright State in the Communications Department. He had such a wonderful sense of humor and he always made me feel like I was going to do great things. I worked hard, and he appreciated that. He would sign me into any class I wanted that was "full," which resulted in me taking 3rd and 4th year classes as a freshman and sophomore. It also meant I ended up accidentally skipping a freshman required class-- COM 105 I think-- and I ended up taking it as a senior, which he found comical. Once in his office he told me when I kept fidgeting that I should consider taking up smoking. He told me to keep working hard and I would achieve great things. He made me feel confident as a young woman in this field, and he was so proud of me that I found a job before graduation. He was more of a mentor to me than a professor, and as a result he will always have a place in my heart and memory. Rest in peace, sir.*

---

**Jessica Olson** - July 15, 2020 at 12:38 PM

TM

“ This man was my neighbor growing up and lived across the street from my parents. He was also a well respected and admired professor at Wright State University. Although I never attended a class of his while I attended Wright State, he was well known and had a great reputation with all the faculty, staff and students who knew him. He never failed to say hello and walk over and chat whenever I came up to visit my parents. Always caring, always giving. He helped both of my parents tremendously while they were both sick...always offering to lend a hand when and where he could. During my Mom's last couple of years of her life and before they moved to Washington to be closer to family, he helped my Mom when she needed it most. He restored her hope and faith and went above and beyond what we asked him to do for her. It was amazing and I will never forget that. I am sure she is thanking him for that up in Heaven right now. Jim... you will be missed by many. Sending lots of condolences, love, and hugs to his family and friends.

*Tina (Barhorst) McGeehen*

---

**Tina McGeehen** - July 15, 2020 at 12:01 PM