



James Gifford "Jim" Bell

November 9, 2019

PIERCE -- Services for James Gifford "Jim" Bell, 93, Rapid City, S.D., formerly of the Pierce and Norfolk area, will be at 2 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 13, at First United Methodist Church in Rapid City. The Rev. Barry Whipkey will officiate. Burial will be in Prospect View Cemetery in Pierce at 11 a.m. Friday, Nov. 15. Stonacek Memorial Chapel was in charge of the local arrangements. Visitation was set to take place from 4 until 6 p.m. Tuesday at Osheim & Schmidt Funeral Home in Rapid City.

James Gifford "Jim" Bell passed away peacefully on Nov. 9, 2019. He is survived by his three sons, Douglas of Rapid City, David (Peggy) of Pinedale, Wyo., and Scott (Susan) of Canton, S.D., seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his beloved spouse, Jean. They were married for nearly 67 years and together they built a wonderful life in Rapid City. His life was very empty with the passing of the love of his life in 2015.

Their early lives were spent on farms near Pierce and Norfolk with their parents, where they worked hard to replace what was lost in The Depression of the '30s. This work and savings ethic was a big part of their lives.

Jim graduated from Pierce High School in 1942 at the age of 16. Jim volunteered for the U.S. Navy, serving as a radar technician and radio operator on the USS Providence. The Naval experience gave Jim the opportunity to "see the world," and he visited many interesting ports of call in the Mediterranean.

After returning from the Navy, he continued his education, graduating from the University of Nebraska in 1948 with a bachelor of science in civil engineering. Jim moved to Rapid City in 1954 and opened an office for Kirkham, Michael and Associates. Jim traveled the roads of South Dakota and surrounding states hard and fast looking for work, and, as a licensed pilot, flew the skies in the company Cessna rain or shine. Later, he was president of Bell, Galyardt and Associates from 1968 to 1988.

Jim and Jean worked as an incredible team, raising the family, caring for their parents until their passing and supporting each other in their respective endeavors. A better team could not be found between these two wonderful, loving and trusting people.

Jim was a successful community leader, trusted advisor, engineer, small business owner and entrepreneur throughout his life and career. He was a volunteer in his community and state and always answered the call for his advice, leadership and wisdom.

Jim worked on or chaired many significant activities throughout his life. Jim was president of the Rapid City and South Dakota State Chamber of Commerce and served on the national level with the chamber of commerce. His efforts with the local Chamber Transportation Committee on the Heartland Expressway earned him the "George Award" from the chamber for his volunteer efforts. He was chairman of the Water Development Task Force for the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce and helped organize the South Dakota Water Congress, serving as a founding director and vice president. Later, he was appointed by Governors Bill Janklow and George Mickelson to the South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources, serving a total of 15 years, eight as chairman, advancing and approving clean water sources and sewage treatment systems for all residents throughout South Dakota. Jim served on the advisory board leading to the formation of the Design Professionals Insurance Company, providing insurance to design professionals, as well as the board of directors of the Urban Land Institute in Washington, D.C.

Both provided him a perspective about his profession, which were valuable assets to his company, clients and volunteer efforts.

Jim also served on the board of directors of the Consulting Engineers Council of America, was on the board, was president and national director of the South Dakota Consulting Engineers Council and was on the board of directors of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

He also served on the board of directors of the Mount Rushmore Memorial Society and was chairman of the technical committee in charge of the reconstruction of all of the base facilities at Mount Rushmore, devoting over 10,000 volunteer hours over the 10-year course of this project. From a technical expertise perspective, Jim's counsel and advice were highly sought after and a direct contribution to the redevelopment to the overall visitor experience at Mount Rushmore.

Jim was instrumental in this effort tirelessly pursuing quality redesign and project execution resulting in a highly successful completed project.

Of note, Jim received a number of significant awards for his service to his profession and as a volunteer throughout South Dakota, including induction into the South Dakota Hall of Fame in 2007. He was given the 1962 R.A. Pier "Good Government Award," was the 1987 Outstanding Engineer of the South Dakota Engineering Society, was honored as the 1997-1998 Distinguished Service Award winner from Cosmopolitan International, was given the "Citizen Engineer Award" by the American Society of Civil Engineers in 2008, and was a "Fellow" and "Life Fellow" of the American Consulting Engineers Council. The Upper Missouri River Water Users Association awarded him their 1991 Honor Award for Distinguished Service for Water Resource Development and Environment.

These awards were valued recognition of years and years of service. And recently Jim was awarded and inducted into the Pierce High School Alumni Hall of Fame. Receiving an award from his home town was a heartfelt tribute to his life.

His reach as a professional engineer was noted throughout much of South Dakota, including the design and construction of many, many miles of interstate highway, numerous beautiful public and private buildings throughout the state, and clean water and waste water disposal systems located not only in South Dakota but the region and nation. His first major project was the Bellevue Bridge over the Missouri River, south of Omaha.

A family vacation might entail a visit to a waste water treatment facility at any time or a stop at a shopping mall to investigate if the auto, tire and battery (ATB) center was attached or detached. It was always considered bread and butter to the family, and you just never knew what information might be important.

Jim was always available when needed the most. He answered the call when the 1972 flood ripped through Rapid City and worked tirelessly with other community leaders from the initial response to implementation of community solutions. His efforts, in part, were responsible for the beauty Rapid City enjoys today with all the parks, open space and walking paths. He recalled many times how business leaders who were fierce competitors worked shoulder to shoulder and hand in hand to respond to the flood devastation for the betterment of Rapid City. It was notably one of Rapid City's finest hours. His vision in planning was critical to the construction of many highways and key transportation improvements throughout South Dakota. The beautiful four-lane highways, known as the Heartland Express, and now enjoyed by today's residents, were in many respects the brain child of Jim working through the local chamber and in conjunction with the governor and state highway department planning efforts.

His dream was to construct and enjoy a family cabin in the Black Hills. In 1959, he was the successful bidder at an auction on a parcel of land in the northern Black Hills that became known as Bourbon Valley. In 1994, Jim and Jean constructed a family cabin at Bourbon Valley and together they enjoyed many, many sunsets at their most favorite retreat.

Jim never stopped his love of Nebraska football — suffering and rejoicing for

years with the ups and downs of the program. But, always loyally enjoying everything that being a Nebraskan and Husker supporter is all about. He was the epitome of a Husker — loyal, humble and understanding. But, fiercely supportive.

The community will miss his wonderful smile, engaging conversation, tough questions and beautiful silver hair. Rapid City has lost one of its most ardent boosters and community members.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to the “Come To The Table” program at the First United Methodist Church.

Friends may sign his online guest register at www.osheimschmidt.com.

Condolences may be expressed to the family on-line at www.stonacekfuneralc Chapel.com.

Cemetery Details

Prospect View Cemetery - Rural Pierce

Pierce, NE

Previous Events

Graveside Service

NOV 15. 11:00 AM (CT)

Prospect View Cemetery - Rural Pierce
Pierce, NE

Tribute Wall



“ *James Gifford "Jim" Bell*

October 05, 2023 at 03:46 AM